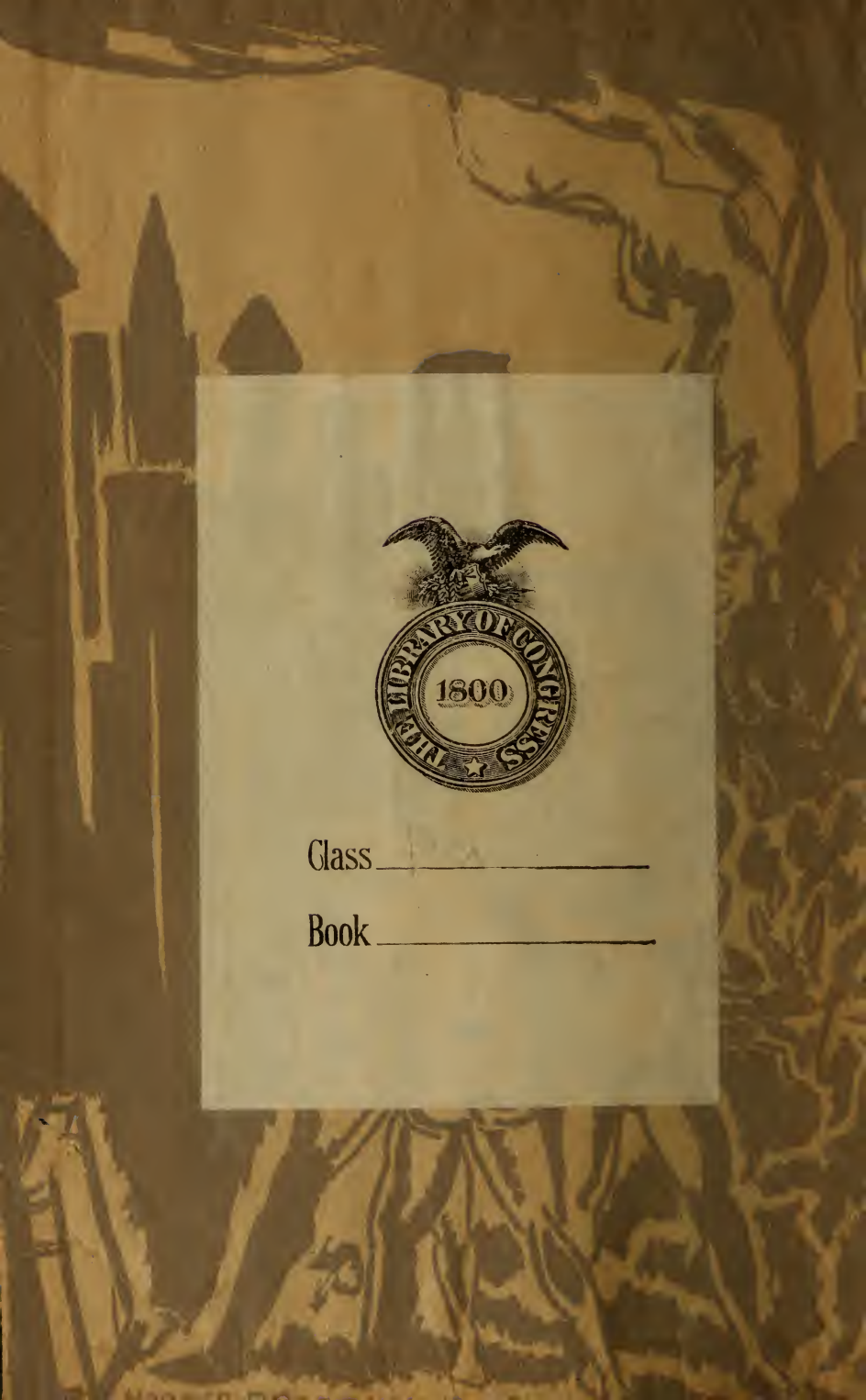

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REDEMPTION
AND TWO OTHER PLAYS

By LEO TOLSTOY

Introduction by ARTHUR HOPKINS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

After making a production of *Redemption,* the chief feeling of the producer is one of deep regret that Tolstoi did not make more use of the theatre as a medium. His was the rare gift of vitalization: the ability to breathe life into word-people which survives in them so long as there is any one left to turn up the pages they have made their abode.

In the world of writing, many terms that should be illuminative have become meaningless. So often has the barren been called "pregnant," the chill of death "the breath of life," the atrophied "pulsating," that when we really come upon a work with beating heart we find it difficult to give it place that has not already been stuffed to suffocation with misplaced dummies.

We seat it at table with staring wax figures and bid it to join the feast. There is no exclusion act in art, no passport bureau, not even hygienic segregation.

In writing the briefest introduction to Tolstoi's work, I am appointed by the publisher, a sort of reception committee of one to escort the work to some fitting place where it may enjoy the surroundings and deference it deserves.

The place to which I escort it is built of words, but what words have been left me by the long procession of previous committees? Where they have been truthfully used they have been glorified, and offer all the rarer material for my structure, but how often have they been subjected to base use. Perhaps some day we will learn the proper respect of such simple words as love and truth and life, and then when we meet them in books we shall know how to greet them.

The study of *Redemption* is so simple that it needs no illumination from me. The characters may walk in

strange lands without introduction. They are part of us. Fedya is in all of us. His one cry "There has always been so much lacking between what I felt and what I could do" instantly makes him brother to all mankind. His simultaneous physical degeneration and spiritual regeneration is the glory that all people have invested in death. Tolstoi's cry against convention that disregards spiritual struggle, and system that ignores human growth, will find answering cries in many breasts in many lands.

Utterly disregarding effect, technique or method, Tolstoi has explored his own soul and there touched hands with countless other souls, and since he has trod the path of countless millions who will come after him, the mementos of his journey will long be sought.

ARTHUR HOPKINS.

The translation of *Redemption* here published is the one produced by Mr. Arthur Hopkins at the Plymouth Theatre, New York, in the season of 1918-1919. The part of FEDYA was played by Mr. John Barrymore.

REDEMPTION

CHARACTERS

THEODORE VASÍLYEVICH PROTOSOV (FÉDYA).
ELISABETH ANDRÉYEVNA PROTOSOVA (LISA). *His wife.*
MÍSHA. *Their son.*
ANNA PÁVLOVNA. *Lisa's mother.*
SASHA. *Lisa's younger, unmarried sister.*
VICTOR MICHAELOVITCH KARÉNIN.
SOPHIA DMÍTRIEVNA KARÉNINA.
PRINCE SERGIUS DMÍTRIEVICH ABRÉSKOV.
MASHA. *A gypsy girl.*
IVÁN MAKÁROVICH. *An old gypsy man.* } *Masha's parents.*
NASTASIA IVÁNOVNA. *An old gypsy woman.* }
OFFICER.
MUSICIAN.
FIRST GYPSY MAN.
SECOND GYPSY MAN.
GYPSY WOMAN.
GYPSY CHOIR.
DOCTOR.
MICHAEL ALEXÁNDROVICH AFRÉMOV.
STÁKHOV. }
BUTKÉVICH. } *Fédya's boon companions.*
KOROTKÓV. }
IVÁN PETROVICH ALEXÁNDROV.
VOZNESÉNSKY. *Karénin's secretary.*
PETUSHKÓV. *An artist.*
ARTIMIEV.
WAITER IN THE PRIVATE ROOM AT THE RESTAURANT.
WAITER IN A LOW-CLASS RESTAURANT.
MANAGER OF THE SAME.
POLICEMAN.
INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE.
MÉLNIKOV.
CLERK.
USHER.
YOUNG LAWYER.
PETRÚSHIN. *A lawyer.*
LADY.
ANOTHER OFFICER.
ATTENDANT AT LAW COURTS.
PROTOSOVS' NURSE.
PROTOSOVS' MAID.
AFRÉMOV'S FOOTMAN.
KARÉNINS' FOOTMAN.

ACT I

Scene 1

Protosovs' flat in Moscow. The scene represents a small dining room. Anna Pavlovna, *a stout, gray-haired lady, tightly laced, is sitting alone at the tea-table on which is a samovar.*

Enter Nurse *carrying a tea-pot.*

Nurse (*enters R. 1, over to table C.*). Please, Madam, may I have some water?

Anna Pavlovna (*sitting R. of table C.*). Certainly. How is the baby now?

Nurse. Oh, restless, fretting all the time. There's nothing worse than for a lady to nurse her child. She has her worries and the baby suffers for them. What sort of milk could she have, not sleeping all night, and crying and crying?

[Sasha *enters R. 1, strolls to L. of table C.*

Anna Pavlovna. But I thought she was more calm now?

Nurse. Fine calm! It makes me sick to look at her. She's just been writing something and crying all the time.

Sasha (*to nurse*). Lisa's looking for you.

[*Sits in chair L. of table C.*

Nurse. I'm going.

[*Exits R. 1.*

Anna Pavlovna. Nurse says she's always crying. Why can't she try and calm herself a little?

Sasha. Well, really, Mother, you're amazing. How can you expect her to behave as if nothing had happened when she's just left her husband and taken her baby with her?

Anna Pavlovna. Well, I don't exactly, but that's all over. If I approve of my daughter's having left her husband, if I'm ever glad, well, you may be quite sure he deserved it. She has no reason to be miserable—on the contrary, she ought to be delighted at being freed from such a wretch.

Sasha. Mother! Why do you go on like this? It's not the truth and you know it. He's not a wretch, he's wonderful. Yes, in spite of all his weakness.

Anna Pavlovna. I suppose you'd like her to wait till he'd spent every kopec they had, and smile sweetly when he brought his gypsy mistresses home with him.

Sasha. He hasn't any mistresses.

Anna Pavlovna. There you go again. Why, the man's simply bewitched you, but I can see through him, and he knows it. If I'd been Lisa, I'd left him a year ago.

Sasha. Oh, how easily you speak of these serious things.

Anna Pavlovna. Not easily, not easily at all. Do you suppose it's agreeable for me to have my daughter admit her marriage a failure? But anything's better than for her to throw away her life in a lie. Thank God, she's made up her mind to finish with him for good.

Sasha. Maybe it won't be for good.

Anna Pavlovna. It would be if only he'd give her a divorce.

Sasha. To what end?

Anna Pavlovna. Because she's young and has the right to look for happiness.

Sasha. It's awful to listen to you. How could she love some one else?

Anna Pavlovna. Why not? There are thousands better than your Fedya, and they'd be only too happy to marry Lisa.

Sasha. Oh, it's not nice of you. I feel, I can tell, you're thinking about Victor Karenin.

Anna Pavlovna. Why not? He loved her for ten years, and she him, I believe.

Sasha. Yes, but she doesn't love him as a husband. They grew up together; they've just been friends.

Anna Pavlovna. Ah, those friendships! How should you know what keeps them warm! If only they were both free!

[*Enter a* MAID *L. U.*

Well?

Maid. The porter's just come back with an answer to the note.

Anna Pavlovna. What note?

Maid. The note Elizaveta Protosova sent to Victor Karenin.

Anna Pavlovna. Well? What answer?

Maid. Victor Karenin told the porter he'd be here directly.

Anna Pavlovna. Very well.

[MAID *exits L. U.*

[*To* SASHA.

Why do you suppose she sent for him? Do you know?

Sasha. Maybe I do and maybe I don't.

Anna Pavlovna. You're always so full of secrets.

Sasha. Ask Lisa, she'll tell you.

Anna Pavlovna. Just as I thought! She sent for him at once.

Sasha. Yes, but maybe not for the reason you think.

Anna Pavlovna. Then what for?

Sasha. Why, Mother, Lisa cares just about as much for Victor Karenin as she does for her old nurse.

Anna Pavlovna. You'll see. She wants consolation, a special sort of consolation.

Sasha. Really, it shows you don't know Lisa at all to talk like this.

Anna Pavlovna. You'll see.

Sasha. Yes, I shall see.

Anna Pavlovna (*alone to herself*). And I am very glad. I'm very, very glad.

[*Enter* MAID.

Maid. Victor Karenin.

Anna Pavlovna. Show him here and tell your mistress.

[MAID *shows in* KARENIN *and exits door R. 1.*

Karenin (*goes C. and stands behind table C.*). (*Shaking hands with Anna Pavlovna.*) Elizaveta Andreyevna sent me a note to come at once. I should have been here to-night anyway. How is she? Well, I hope.

Anna Pavlovna. Not very. The baby has been upset again. However, she'll be here in a minute. Will you have some tea?

Karenin. No, thank you.

[*Sits chair R.*

Anna Pavlovna. Tell me, do you know that he and she——

Karenin. Yes, I was here two days ago when she got this letter. Is she positive now about their separating?

Anna Pavlovna. Oh, absolutely. It would be impossible to begin it all over again.

Karenin. Yes. To cut into living things and then draw back the knife is terrible. But are you sure she knows her mind?

Anna Pavlovna. I should think so. To come to this decision has caused her much pain. But now it's final, and he understands perfectly that his behavior has made it impossible for him to come back on any terms.

Karenin. Why?

Anna Pavlovna. After breaking every oath he swore to decency, how could he come back? And so why shouldn't he give her her freedom?

Karenin. What freedom is there for a woman still married?

Anna Pavlovna. Divorce. He promised her a divorce and we shall insist upon it.

Karenin. But your daughter was so in love with him?

Anna Pavlovna. Her love has been tried out of existence. Remember she had everything to contend with: drunkenness, gambling, infidelity—what was there to go on loving in such a person?

Karenin. Love can do anything.

Anna Pavlovna. How can one love a rag torn by every wind? Their affairs were in dreadful shape; their estate mortgaged; no money anywhere. Finally his uncle sends them two thousand rubles to pay the interest on the estate. He takes it, disappears, leaves Lisa home and the baby sick —when suddenly she gets a note asking her to send him his linen.

Karenin. I know.

[*Enter* LISA *R. 1.* KARENIN *crosses to* LISA.

I'm sorry to have been a little detained.

[*Shakes hands with* LISA.

Lisa. Oh, thank you so much for coming. I have a

great favor to ask of you. Something I couldn't ask of anybody else.

Karenin. I'll do everything I can.

[LISA *moves away a few steps down R.*

Lisa. You know all about this.

[*Sits chair R.*

Karenin. Yes, I know.

Anna Pavlovna. Well, I think I'll leave you two young people to yourselves.

(*To* SASHA.) Come along, dear, you and I will be just in the way.

[*Exit L. U.* ANNA PAVLOVNA *and* SASHA.

Lisa. Fedya wrote to me saying it was all over between us. (*She begins to cry.*) That hurt me so, bewildered me so, that—well, I agreed to separate. I wrote to him saying I was willing to give him up if he wanted me to.

Karenin. And now you're sorry?

Lisa (*nodding*). I feel I oughtn't to have said yes. I can't. Anything is better than not to see him again. Victor dear, I want you to give him this letter and tell him what I've told you, and—and bring him back to me.

[*Gives* VICTOR *a letter.*

Karenin. I'll do what I can.

[*Takes letter, turns away and sits chair R. of table C.*

Lisa. Tell him I will forget everything if only he will come back. I thought of mailing this, only I know him: he'd have a good impulse, first thwarted by some one, some one who would finally make him act against himself.

[*Pause.*

Are you—are you surprised I asked you?

Karenin. No. (*He hesitates.*) But—well, candidly, yes. I am rather surprised.

Lisa. But you are not angry?

Karenin. You know I couldn't be angry with you.

Lisa. I ask you because I know you're so fond of him.

Karenin. Of him—and of you too. Thank you for trusting me. I'll do all I can.

Lisa. I know you will. Now I'm going to tell you everything. I went to-day to Afremov's, to find out where he

was. They told me he was living with the gypsies. Of course that's what I was afraid of. I know he'll be swept off his feet if he isn't stopped in time. So you'll go, won't you?

Karenin. Where's the place?

Lisa. It's that big tenement where the gypsy orchestra lives, on the left bank below the bridge. I went there myself. I went as far as the door, and was just going to send up the letter, but somehow I was afraid. I don't know why. And then I thought of you. Tell him, tell him I've forgotten everything and that I'm here waiting for him to come home. (*Crosses to* KARENIN—*a little pause.*) Do it out of love for him, Victor, and out of friendship for me.

[*Another pause.*

Karenin. I'll do all I can.

[*He bows to her and goes out L. U. Enter* SASHA *L. U., goes L. over near table C.*

Sasha. Has the letter gone? (LISA *nods.*) He had no objections to taking it himself?

[LISA, *R. C., shakes head.*

Sasha (*L. C.*). Why did you ask him? I don't understand it.

Lisa. Who else was there?

Sasha. But you know he's in love with you.

Lisa. Oh, that's all past. (*Over to table* C.) Do you think Fedya will come back?

Sasha. I'm sure he will, but——

[*Enter* ANNA PAVLOVNA.

Anna Pavlovna. Where's Victor Karenin?

Lisa. Gone.

Anna Pavlovna. Gone?

Lisa. I've asked him to do something for me.

Anna Pavlovna. What was it? Another secret?

Lisa. No, not a secret. I simply asked him to take a letter to Fedya.

Anna Pavlovna. To Fedor Protosov?

Lisa. Oh, to Fedya, Fedya.

Anna Pavlovna. Then it's not going to be over?

Lisa. I can't let him leave me.

Anna Pavlovna. Oh, so we shall commence all over again.

Lisa. I'll do anything you like, but I can't give him up.

Anna Pavlovna. You don't mean you want him to come back?

Lisa. Yes, yes.

Anna Pavlovna. Let that reptile into the house again!

Lisa. Please don't talk like that. He's my husband.

Anna Pavlovna. Was your husband.

Lisa. No. He's still my husband.

Anna Pavlovna. Spendthrift. Drunkard. Reprobate. And you'll not part from him!

Lisa. Oh, Mother, why do you keep on hurting me! You seem to enjoy it.

Anna Pavlovna. Hurt you, do I? Enjoy it, do I? Very well, then, if that's the case, I'd better go.

[*Pause.*

I see I'm in your way. You *want* me to go. Well, all I can say is I can't make you out. I suppose you're being "modern" and all that. But to me, it's just plain disgusting. First, you make up your mind to separate from your husband, and then you up and send for another man who's in love with you——

Lisa. Mother, *he's not.*

Anna Pavlovna. You know Karenin proposed to you, and he's the man you pick out to bring back your husband. I suppose you do it just to make him jealous.

Lisa. Oh, Mother, stop it. Leave me alone.

Anna Pavlovna. That's right. Send off your mother. Open the door to that awful husband. Well, I can't stand by and see you do it. I'll go. I'm going. And God be with you and your extraordinary ways.

[*Exit L. U. with suppressed rage.*

Lisa (*sinking into a chair R. of table C.*). That's the last straw.

Sasha. Oh, she'll come back. We'll make her understand. (*Going to the door and following after her mother.*) Now, Mother darling, listen—listen——

[*Exit L. U.*

[*All lights dim to black out.*

CURTAIN

Scene II

A room at the gypsies', dark but beautifully lit. The actual room is scarcely seen, and although at first it appears squalid, there are flaring touches of Byzantine luxury. Gypsies are singing. Fedya *is lying on the sofa, his eyes closed, coat off. An* Officer *sits at the table, on which there are bottles of champagne and glasses. Beside him sits a musician taking down the song.*

Afremov (*standing L. U.*). Asleep?

Fedya (*on couch L. Raising his hand warningly*). Sh! Don't talk! Now let's have "No More at Evening."

Gypsy Leader. Impossible, Fedor Protosov. Masha must have her solo first.

Fedya. Afterwards. Now let's have "No More at Evening."

[*Gypsies sing.*

Gypsy Woman (*R. C., when they finish singing, turning to Musician who is sitting at table R., with his back to audience*). Have you got it?

Musician. It's *impossible* to take it down correctly. They change the tune each *time,* and they seem to have a different scale, too. (*He calls a gypsy woman.*) Is this it?

[*He hums a bar or two.*

Gypsy Woman (*clapping her hands*). Splendid! Wonderful! How can you do it?

Fedya (*rising. Goes to table L. back of couch and pours out glass of wine*). He'll never get it. And even if he did and shovelled it into an opera, he'd make it seem absolutely meaningless.

Afremov. Now we'll have "The Fatal Hour."

[*Gypsies sing quartette. During this song,* Fedya *is standing down R., keeping time with the wine glass from which he has drunk. When they finish he returns to the couch and falls into* Masha's *arms.*

Fedya. God! That's it! That's it! That's wonderful. What lovely things that music says. And where does it all come from, what does it all mean?

[*Another pause.*

To think that men can touch eternity like that, and then —nothing—nothing at all.

Musician. Yes, it's very original.

[*Taking notes.*

Fedya. Original be damned. It's real.

Musician. It's all very simple, except the rhythm. That's very strange.

Fedya. Oh, Masha, Masha! You turn my soul inside out.

[*Gypsies hum a song softly.*

Masha (*sitting on couch L. with* FEDYA). Do I? But what was it I asked you for?

Fedya. What? Oh, money. Voilà, mademoiselle.

[*He takes money from his trousers pocket.* MASHA *laughs, takes the money, counts it swiftly, and hides it in her dress.*

Fedya. Look at this strange creature. When she sings she rushes me into the sky and all she asks for is money, little presents of money for throwing open the Gates of Paradise. You don't know yourself, at all, do you?

Masha. What's the use of me wondering about myself? I know when I'm in love, and I know that I sing best when my love is singing.

Fedya. Do you love me?

Masha (*murmuring*). I love you.

Fedya. But I am a married man, and you belong to this gypsy troupe. They wouldn't let you leave it, and——

Masha (*interrupting*). The troupe's one thing, and my heart's another. I love those I love, and I hate those I hate.

Fedya. Oh, you must be happy to be like that.

Masha. I'm always happy when handsome gentlemen come and say nice things to me. (*Gypsies stop singing.*)

[*A gypsy entering speaks to* FEDYA.

Gypsy. Some one asking for you.

Fedya. Who?

Gypsy. Don't know. He's rich, though. Fur coat.

Fedya. Fur coat? O my God, show him in.

Afremov. Who the devil wants to see you here?

Fedya (*carelessly*). God knows, I don't. (*Begins to hum a song.*)

[KARENIN *comes in, looking around the room.*

(*Exclaiming*). Ha! Victor! You're the last man in the world I expected to break into this enchanting milieu. Take off your coat, and they'll sing for you.

Karenin. Je voudrais vous parler sans témoins.

[MASHA *rises and joins the group R.*

Fedya. Oh. . . . What about?

Karenin. Je viens de chez vous. Votre femme ma chargé de cette lettre, et puis——

[FEDYA *takes the letter, opens it, reads. He frowns, then smiles affectionately at* KARENIN.

Fedya. You know what's in this letter, Victor?

[*He is smiling gently all the time.*

Karenin (*looking at Fedya rather severely*). Yes, I know. But really, Fedya, you're in no——

Fedya (*interrupting*). Please, please don't think I'm drunk and don't realize what I'm saying. Of course I'm drunk, but I see everything very clearly. Now go ahead. What were you told to tell me?

Karenin (*is standing L. C. Shrugging his shoulders*). Your wife asked me to find you and to tell you she's waiting for you. She wants you to forget everything and come back.

[*Pause.*

Karenin (*stiffly*). Elizaveta Protosova sent for me and suggested that I——

Fedya (*as he hesitates*). Yes.

Karenin (*finishing rather lamely*). But I ask you not so much for her as for myself—— Fedya, come *home.*

Fedya (*looking up at him, smiling rather whimsically*). You're a much finer person than I am, Victor. Of course that's not saying much. I'm not very much good, am I? (*Laughing gently.*) But that's exactly why I'm not going to do what you want me to. It's not the only reason, though. The real reason is that I just simply can't. How could I?

Karenin (*persuasively*). Come along to my rooms, Fedya, and I'll tell her you'll be back to-morrow.

Fedya (*wistfully*). To-morrows can't change what we are. She'll still be she, and I will still be I to-morrow. (*Goes to the table and drinks.*) No, it's better to have the tooth out in one pull. Didn't I say that if I broke my word she was to leave me? Well, I've broken it, and that's enough.

Karenin. Yes. For you, but not for her.

Fedya (*down L. Politely insolent*). You know . . . it's rather odd, that you, of all men, should take so much trouble to keep our marriage from going to pieces.

Karenin (*revolted*). Good God, Fedya! You don't think——

[MASHA *crosses L., goes to* FEDYA. FEDYA *interrupting him with a return of his former friendliness.*

Fedya. Come now, my dear Victor, you shall hear them sing.

Masha (*whispering to Fedya*). What's his name? We must honor him with a song.

Fedya (*laughing*). O good God, yes! Honor him by all means. His name is Victor Michaelovitch. (*Saluting Karenin.*) Victor, my lord! son of Michael!

[*The gypsies sing a song of greeting and laudation. As they begin to sing,* MASHA *and* FEDYA *sit on couch L.*

(*When song is finished.*)

Karenin (*in an imploring tone*). Fedya!

[*Exits quietly L. U.*

Fedya (*business with Masha*). Where's the fur coat? Gone, eh? All right. May the devil go with it.

Fedya. Do you know who that was?

Masha. I heard his name.

Fedya. Ah, he's a splendid fellow. He came to take me home to my wife. You see she loves even a fool like me, (*caressing her hair*) and look what I'm doing.

Masha. You should go back to her and be very sorry.

Fedya. Do you think I should? (*He kisses her.*) Well, I think I shouldn't.

Masha. Of course, you needn't go back to her if you don't love her. Love is all that counts.

Fedya (*smiling*). How do you know that?

Masha (*looking at him timidly*). I don't know, but I do.

Fedya. Now, let's have "No More at Evening." (*As the gypsies sing,* MASHA *lies on her back across his lap, looking up into his face, which she draws down to her, and they kiss until the music begins to cease.*) That's wonderful! Divine! If I could only lie this way forever, with my arms around the heart of joy, and sleep . . . and die. . . . (*He closes his eyes; his voice trails away.*)

[*Lights dim and out, then the*

CURTAIN

SCENE III

SOPHIA KARENINA'S *boudoir.* SOPHIA KARENINA, VICTOR'S *mother, is reading a book. She is a great lady, over fifty, but tries to look younger. She likes to interlard her conversation with French words. A servant enters.*

Servant (*enters R., announcing*). Prince Sergius Abreskov.

Sophia Karenina (*on sofa over L.*). Show him in, please.

[*She turns and picks up hand mirror from table back of couch, arranging her hair.*

Prince Sergius (*enters R. 1. Entering*). J'espère que je ne force pas la consigne.

[*Crossing to sofa L. He kisses her hand. He is a charming old diplomat of seventy.*

Sophia Karenina. Ah, you know well que vous êtes toujours le bien venu. . . . Tell me, you have received my letter?

Prince Sergius. I did. Me voilà. (*Sits L. on sofa L.*)

Sophia Karenina (*working up to distress*). Oh, my dear friend, I begin to lose hope. She's bewitched him, positively bewitched him. Il est ensorcelé. I never knew he could be so obstinate, so heartless, and so indifferent to

me. He's changed completely since that woman left her husband.

Prince Sergius. How do matters actually stand?

Sophia Karenina. Well, he's made up his mind to marry her at any cost.

Prince Sergius. And her husband?

Sophia Karenina. He agrees to a divorce.

Prince Sergius. Really?

Sophia Karenina. And Victor is willing to put up with all the sordidness, the vulgarity of the divorce court, the lawyers, evidences of guilt . . . tout ça est dégoûtant. I can't understand his sensitive nature not being repelled by it.

Prince Sergius (*smiling*). He's in love, and when a man's really in love——

Sophia Karenina (*interrupting*). In our time love could remain pure, coloring one's whole life with a romantic friendship. Such love I understand and value.

Prince Sergius (*sighing*). However, the present generation refuses to live on dreams. (*He coughs delicately.*) La possession de l'âme ne leur suffit plus. So what is the alternative? But tell me more of Victor.

Sophia Karenina. There's not very much to say. He seems bewitched, hardly my son. Did you know I'd called upon her? Victor pressed me so it was impossible to refuse. But Dieu merci, I found her out. So I merely left my card, and now she has asked me if I could receive her to-day, and I am expecting her (*she glances at her watch*) any moment now. I am doing all this to please Victor, but conceive my feelings. I know you always can. Really, really, I need your help.

Prince Sergius (*bowing*). Thank you for the honor you do me.

Sophia Karenina. You realize this visit decides Victor's fate. I must refuse my consent, or—— But that's impossible.

Prince Sergius. Have you met her?

Sophia Karenina. I've never seen her, but I'm afraid of her. No good woman leaves her husband, especially when there's nothing obviously intolerable about him. Why,

I've seen Protosov often with Victor, and found him even quite charming.

Prince Sergius (*murmurs*). So I've heard. So I've heard.

Sophia Karenina (*continuing*). She should bear her cross without complaint. And Victor must cease trying to persuade himself that his happiness lies in defying his principles. What I don't understand is how Victor, with his religious views, can think of marrying a divorced woman. I've heard him say over and over again—once quite lately—that divorce is totally inconsistent with true Christianity. If she's been able to fascinate him to that point, I *am* afraid of her.—But how stupid of me to talk all the time! Have you spoken to him at all? What does he say? And don't you thoroughly agree with me?

Prince Sergius. Yes, I've spoken to Victor. I think he really loves her, has grown accustomed to the idea of loving her, pour ainsi dire. (*Shaking his head.*) I don't believe he could ever now care for another woman.

Sophia Karenina (*sighing*). And Varia Casanzeva would have made him such a charming wife. She's so devoted already.

Prince Sergius (*smiling*). I am afraid I hardly see her in the present . . . tableau. (*Earnestly.*) Why not submit to Victor's wish and help him?

Sophia Karenina. To marry a divorcée? And afterwards have him running into his wife's husband? How can you calmly suggest that a mother accept such a situation for her son?

Prince Sergius. But, chère amie, why not approve of the inevitable? And you might console yourself by regarding the dangers he'll avoid by marrying this gentle, lovely woman. After all, suppose he conceived a passion for some one——

[*Convey the word "disreputable".*

Sophia Karenina. How can a good woman leave her husband?

Prince Sergius. Ah, that's not like you. You're unkind and you're harsh. Her husband is the sort of man—well, he's his own worst enemy. A weakling, a ne'er-do-well—

he's spent all his money and hers too. She has a child. Do you think you can condemn her for leaving him? As a matter of fact she didn't leave him, he left her.

Sophia Karenina (*faintly*). Oh what a mud-pen I'm slipping into!

Prince Sergius (*amused*). Could your religion aid you?

Sophia Karenina (*smelling her salts*). In this instance, religion would require of me the impossible. C'est plus fort que moi.

Prince Sergius. Fedya himself—you know what a charming clever creature he is when he's in his senses—he advised her to leave him.

[*Enter* VICTOR *who kisses his mother's hand and greets* PRINCE SERGIUS.

Karenin. Ah, Prince Sergius! (*Shakes hands with Prince—formally.*) Maman, I've come to tell you that Elizaveta Protosova will be here directly. There's only one thing I ask you: do you still refuse your consent to my marriage——

Sophia Karenina (*interrupting*). And I most assuredly do.

Karenin (*continuing. Frowning*). In that case all I ask is for you not to speak to her about it.

Sophia Karenina. I don't suppose we shall even mention the subject. I certainly shan't.

Karenin (*standing at head of sofa L.*). If you don't, she won't. (*Pleadingly.*) Mother dear, I just want you to know her.

Sophia Karenina. One thing I can't understand. How is it you want to marry Lisa Protosova, a woman with a living husband, and at the same time believe divorce is a crime against Christianity?

Karenin. Oh, Maman, that's cruel of you. Life is far too complex to be managed by a few formulas. Why are you so bitter about it all?

Sophia Karenina (*honestly*). I love you. I want you to be happy.

Karenin (*imploringly to Prince Sergius*). Sergius Abreskov!

Prince Sergius (*to Sophia Karenina*). Naturally you want him happy. But it's difficult for our hearts, wearied from the weight of years, to feel the pulse of youth and sympathize, especially is it difficult for you, my friend, who have schooled yourself to view Victor's happiness in a single way. . . .

Sophia Karenina. Oh, you're all against me. Do as you like. Vous êtes majeur. (*Sniffing into her pocket handkerchief.*) But you'll kill me.

Karenin (*deeply distressed*). Ah, Mother, please. It's worse than cruel to say things like that.

Prince Sergius (*smiling to Victor*). Come, come, Victor, you know your mother speaks more severely than she could ever act.

Sophia Karenina. I shall tell her exactly what I think and feel, and I hope I can do it without offending her.

Prince Sergius. I am sure of it.

[*Enter* FOOTMAN.

Here she is.

Karenin. I'll go. (*Goes to back of sofa.*)

Footman (*announcing*). Elizaveta Andreyevna Protosova.

Karenin (*warningly*). Now, Mother.

[*He goes out L.* PRINCE SERGIUS *rises.*

Sophia Karenina (*majestically*). Show her in. (*To Prince Sergius.*) Please remain.

Prince Sergius. I thought you might prefer a tête-à-tête?

Sophia Karenina. No, no. I rather dread it. And if I want to be left alone in the room with her, I'll drop my handkerchief. Ça dépendra.

Prince Sergius. I'm sure you're going to like her immensely.

Sophia Karenina. Oh you're all against me.

[*Enter* LISA *R. and crosses to R. C.*

(*Rising*) How do you do? I was so sorry not to find you at home and it is most kind of you to come to see me.

Lisa (*R. C.*). I never expected the honor of your visit, and I am so grateful that you permit me to come and see you.

Sophia Karenina (*C.*). You know Prince Sergius Abreskov?

Prince Sergius (*L.—Heartily*). Yes, I have had the pleasure. (*Crossing to her, he shakes hands.*) My niece Nellie has spoken often of you to me.

[*Goes to L. C.*

Lisa. Yes, we were great friends. (*She glances shyly around her.*) And still are. (*To* SOPHIA.) I never hoped that you would wish to see me.

Sophia Karenina. I knew your husband quite well. He was a great friend of Victor's and used frequently to visit us in Tambov, (*politely*) where you were married, I believe.

Lisa (*looking down*). Yes.

Sophia Karenina. But when you returned to Moscow we were deprived of the pleasure of his visit.

Lisa. Yes, then he stopped going anywhere.

Sophia Karenina. Ah, that explains our missing him.

[*Awkward pause.*

Prince Sergius (*to* LISA). The last time I'd the pleasuse of seeing you was in those tableaux at the Dennishovs. You were charming in your part.

Lisa. How good of you to think so! Yes, I remember perfectly.

[*Another awkward silence.*

(*To* SOPHIA KARENINA.) Sophia Karenina, please forgive me if what I am going to say offends you, but I don't know how to cover up what's in my heart. I came here to-day because Victor Karenin said—because he said that—because he—I mean because you wanted to see me. (*With a catch in her voice.*) It's rather difficult—but you're so sweet.

Prince Sergius (*very sympathetic*). There, there, my dear child, I assure you there's nothing in the world to—— (*He breaks off when he sees* SOPHIA KARENINA *pointing impatiently to the floor. She has dropped her handkerchief.*) Permit me. (*He picks it up, presenting it to her with a smile and a bow; then looks casually at his watch.*) Ah, five o'clock already. (*To* SOPHIA KARENINA.) Madame, in your salon pleasure destroys the memory of time. You will excuse me.

[*He kisses her hand.*

Sophia Karenina (*smiling*). Au revoir, mon ami.

Prince Sergius (*bowing and shaking hands with* LISA). Elizaveta Protosova, au revoir.

[*He goes out R.*

Sophia Karenina. Now listen, my child. Please believe how truly sorry for you I am and that you are most sympathetique to me. But I love my son alone in this world, and I know his soul as I do my own. He's very proud—oh I don't mean of his position and money—but of his high ideals, his purity. It may sound strange to you, but you must believe me when I tell you that at heart he is as pure as a young girl.

Lisa. I know.

Sophia Karenina. He's never loved a woman before. You're the first. I don't say I'm not a little jealous. I am. But that's something we mothers have to face. Oh, but your son's still a baby, you don't know. I was ready to give him up, though—but I wanted his wife to be as pure as himself.

Lisa (*flushing hotly*). And I, am I not——

Sophia Karenina (*interrupting her kindly*). Forgive me, my dear. I know it's not your fault and that you've been most unhappy. And also I know my son. He will bear anything, and he'll bear it without saying a word, but his hurt pride will suffer and bring you infinite remorse. You must know how strongly he has always felt that the bond of marriage is indissoluble.

Lisa. Yes. I've thought of all that.

Sophia Karenina. Lisa, my dear, you're a wise woman and you're a good woman too. If you love him, you must want his happiness more than you want your own. You can't want to cripple him so that he'll be sorry all his life—yes, sorry even though he never says a word.

Lisa. I've thought about it so much. I've thought about it and I've talked to him about it. But what can I do when he says he can't live without me? I said to him only the other day, "Victor, let's just be friends. Don't spoil your life. Don't ruin yourself by trying to help me." And do you know what he did? He laughed.

Sophia Karenina. Of course he would, at the time.

Lisa. If you could persuade him not to marry me, you know I'll agree, don't you? I just want him to be happy. I don't care about myself. Only please help me. Please don't hate me. Let's do all we can for him, because, after all, we both love him.

Sophia Karenina. Yes, I know. And I think I love you too. I really do. (*She kisses her.* LISA *begins to cry.*) Oh, it's all so dreadful. If only he had fallen in love with you before you were married!

Lisa (*sobbing*). He—he says he did—but he had to be loyal to his friend.

Sophia Karenina. Alas, it's all very heart-breaking. But let us love each other, and God will help us to find what we are seeking.

Karenin (*entering L. 1*). Mother darling. I've heard what you just said. I knew you'd love her. And now everything must come right.

Sophia Karenina (*hastily*). But nothing's decided. All I can say is, had things been different, I should have been very glad. (*Tenderly.*) So very glad.

[*She kisses* LISA.

Karenin (*smiling*). Please don't change. That's all I ask.

[*Lights down and out.*

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A plainly furnished room, bed, table and stove. FEDYA *alone writing.*

At rise MASHA *is heard outside calling* "FEDYA! FEDYA!" MASHA *enters R. 1, crosses to* FEDYA *on bed C. and embraces him.*

Fedya. Ah, thank Heaven you've come. I was wasting away in boredom.

Masha. Then why didn't you come over to us? (*Sees wine glass on chair near bed.*) So, you've been drinking again? And after all your promises!

Fedya (*embarrassed*). I didn't come over because I had no money.

Masha. Oh, why is it I love you so.

Fedya. Masha!

Masha (*imitating him*). Masha! Masha! What's that mean? If you loved me, by now you'd have your divorce. You say you don't love your wife. (FEDYA *winces.*) But you stick to her like grim death.

Fedya (*interrupting her*). You know why I don't want to.

Masha. Nonsense. They're right when they say you're no good. It's your mind that you can never make up comfortably causing you all the worry.

Fedya. You know perfectly well that the only joy I've got in life is being in love with you.

Masha. Oh, it's always "My joy," "Your love." Where's your love and my joy?

Fedya (*a little wearily*). Well, Masha, after all, you've got all I can give, the best I've ever had to give, perhaps, because you're so strong, so beautiful, that sometimes you've made me know how to make you glad. So why torture yourself?

Masha (*kneels and puts her arms around his neck*). I won't if you're sure you love me.

Fedya (*coming closer to her*). My beautiful young Masha.

Masha (*tearfully, searching his face*). You do love me?

Fedya. Of course, of course.

Masha. Only me, only me?

Fedya (*kissing her*). Darling, only you.

Masha (*with a return to brightness*). Now read me what you've written.

Fedya. It may bore you.

Masha (*reproachfully*). How could it?

Fedya (*reads*). "The snow was flooded in moonlight and the birch trees wavered their stark shadows across it like supplicating arms. Suddenly I heard the soft padded sound of snow falling upon snow, to slowly perceive a figure, the slender figure of a young child attempting to arouse itself almost at my feet—I——"

[*Enter* IVAN *and* NASTASIA. *They are two old gypsies,* MASHA'S *parents.*

Nastasia (*stepping up to* MASHA). So here you are —you cursed little stray sheep. No disrespect to you, sir. (*To* MASHA.) You black-hearted, ungrateful little snake. How dare you treat us like this, how dare you, eh?

Ivan (*to* FEDYA). It's not right, sir, what you've done, bringing to her ruin our only child. It's against God's law.

Nastasia (*to* MASHA). Come and get out of here with me. You thought you'd skip, didn't you? And what was I supposed to tell the troupe while you dangled around here with this tramp? What can you get out of him, tell me that? Did you know he hasn't got a kopek to his name, didn't you?

[*During scene with parents,* FEDYA *sits dumbly on the bed, bewildered. He puts his forehead against* MASHA'S *face and clings to her like a child.*

Masha (*sullenly*). I haven't done anything wrong. I love this gentleman, that's all. I didn't leave the troupe either. I'll go on singing just the same.

Ivan. If you talk any more, I'll pull your hair all out for you, you loose little beast, you. (*To* FEDYA, *reproachfully.*) And you, sir, when we were so fond of you—why, often and often we used to sing for you for nothing and this is how you pay us back.

Nastasia (*rocking herself to and fro*). You've ruined our daughter, our very own, our only one, our best beloved, our diamond, our precious one, (*with sudden fury*). You've stamped her into the dirt, you have. Where's your fear of God?

Fedya. Nastasia, Nastasia, you've made a mistake. Your daughter is like a sister to me. I haven't harmed her at all. I love her, that's true. But how can I help it?

Ivan. Well, why didn't you love her when you had some money? If you'd paid us ten thousand rubles, you could have owned her, body and soul. That's what respectable gentlemen do. But you—you throw away every kopek you've got and then you steal her like you'd steal a sack of meal. You ought to be ashamed, sir.

Masha (*rising, puts her arm around his neck*). He

didn't steal me. I went to him myself, and if you take me away now, I'll come right back. If you take me away a thousand times, I'll come back to him. I love him and that's enough. My love will break through anything—through anything. Through anything in the whole damn world.

Nastasia (*trying to soothe her*). Now, Mashenka darling, don't get cross. You know you haven't behaved well to your poor old parents. There, there, come along with us now.

[*With greedy fingers that pretend to caress,* NASTASIA *seizes her savagely and suddenly at the end of this speech and draws her to the door.* MASHA *cries out* "FEDYA! FEDYA!" *as she exits R.*

Ivan (*alongside*). You open your mouth again and I'll smash you dumb. (*To* FEDYA.) Good-bye, your worship.

[*All exit R. 1.*

[FEDYA *sits as though stupefied. The gypsies exit noisily. There is a pause. He drinks; then* PRINCE SERGIUS *appears, very quiet and dignified, at the door.*

Prince. Excuse me. I'm afraid I'm intruding upon a rather painful scene.

Fedya (*getting up*). With whom have I the honor—— (*recognizing the Prince*). Ah, Prince Sergius, how do you do?

[*They shake hands.*

Prince (*in a distinguished manner*). I repeat that I am afraid to be most inopportune. I would rather not have heard, but since I have, it's my duty to say so. When I arrived I knocked several times, but I presume you could not have heard through such uproar.

Fedya. Do sit down. (*Prince sits chair R. C.*) Thanks for telling me you heard. (*Sits on bed up C.*) It gives me a chance to explain it all. Forgive me for saying your opinion of me can't concern me, but I want to tell you that the way her parents talked to that young girl, that gypsy singer, was absolutely unjust. She's as pure as your own mother. My relations with her are simply friendly ones.

Possibly there is a ray of poetry in them, but that could hardly degrade her. However, what can I do for you?

Prince Sergius. Well, to begin——

Fedya (*interrupting*). Excuse me, Prince, but my present social position hardly warrants a visit from you. [*Smiling.*

Prince Sergius. I know that, but I ask you to believe that your changed position does not influence me in what I am about to tell you.

Fedya (*interrogatively*). Then?

Prince Sergius. To be as brief as possible, Victor Karenin, the son of my old friend, Sophia Karenina, and she herself, have asked me to discover from you personally what your present relations are with your wife, and what intentions you have regarding them.

Fedya. My relations with my wife—I should say my former wife—are several.

Prince Sergius. As I thought, and for this reason accepted my somewhat difficult mission.

Fedya (*quickly*). I wish to say first of all that the fault was entirely mine. She is, just as she always was, absolutely stainless, faultless.

Prince Sergius. Victor Karenin and especially his mother are anxious to know your exact intentions regarding the future.

Fedya. I've got no intentions. I've given her full freedom. I know she loves Victor Karenin, let her. Personally, I think he is a bore, but he is a good bore. So they'll probably be very happy together, at least in the ordinary sense and que le bon Dieu les bénisse.

Prince Sergius. Yes, but we——

Fedya (*rising, goes L., leans on table*). Please don't think I'm jealous. If I just said Victor was dull, I take it back. He's splendid, very decent, in fact the opposite of myself, and he's loved her since her childhood (*slowly*) and maybe she loved him even when we were married. After all, that happens, and the strongest love is perhaps unconscious love. Yes, I think she's always loved him far, far down beneath what she would admit to herself, and this feeling of mine has been a black shadow across our mar-

ried life. But—I—I really don't suppose I ought to be talking to you like this, ought I?

Prince Sergius. Please go on. My only object in coming was to understand this situation completely, and I begin to see how the shadow—as you charmingly express it—could have been——

Fedya (*looking strangely ahead of him*). Yes, no brightness could suck up that shadow. And so I suppose I never was satisfied with what my wife gave me, and I looked for every kind of distraction, sick at heart because I did so. I see it more and more clearly since we've been apart. Oh, but I sound as if I were defending myself. God knows I don't want to do that. No, I was a shocking bad husband. I say was, because now I don't consider myself her husband at all. She's perfectly free. There, does that satisfy you?

Prince Sergius. Yes, but you know how strictly orthodox Victor and his family are. Of course I don't agree with them—perhaps I have broader views—(*with a shrug*) but I understand how they feel. They consider that any union without a church marriage is—well, to put it mildly, unthinkable.

Fedya. Yes, I know he's very stu—I mean strict. (*With a slight smile.*) "Conservative" is the word, isn't it? But what in God's name (*crossing to C.*) do they want, a divorce? I told them long ago I was perfectly willing. But the business of hiring a street-woman and taking her to a shady hotel and arranging to be caught by competent witnesses—ugh—it's all so—so loathsome.

[*He shudders—pauses; and sits on bed.*

Prince Sergius. I know. I know. I assure you, I can sympathize with such a repugnance, but how can one avoid it? You see, it's the only way out. But, my dear boy, you mustn't think I don't sympathize with you. It's a horrible situation for a sensitive man and I quite understand how you must hate it.

Fedya. Thank you, Prince Sergius. I always knew you were kind and just. Now tell me what to do. Put yourself in my place. I don't pretend to be any better than I really am. I am a blackguard but there are some things that even

I can't do. (*With a smile and helpless gesture.*) I can't tell lies.

[*A pause.*

Prince Sergius. I must confess that you bewilder me. You with your gifts and charm and really au fond—a wonderful sense of what's right. How could you have permitted yourself to plunge into such tawdry distractions? How could you have forgotten so far what you owed to yourself? Tell me, why did you let your life fall into this ruin?

Fedya (*suppressing emotion*). I've led this sort of life for ten years and you're the first real person to show me sympathy. Of course, I've been pitied by the degraded ones but never before by a sensible, kind man like you. Thanks more than it's possible to say. (*He seems to forget his train of thought and suddenly to recall it.*) Ah, yes, my ruin. Well, first, drink, not because it tasted well, but because everything I did disappointed me so, made me so ashamed of myself. I feel ashamed now, while I talk to you. Whenever I drank, shame was drowned in the first glass, and sadness. Then music, not opera or Beethoven, but gypsy music; the passion of it poured energy into my body, while those dark bewitching eyes looked into the bottom of my soul. (*He sighs.*) And the more alluring it all was, the more shame I felt afterwards.

[*Pause.*

Prince Sergius. But what about your career?

Fedya. My career? This seems to be it. Once I was a director of a bank. There was something terribly lacking between what I felt and what I could do. (*Abruptly.*) But enough, enough of myself. It makes me rather nervous to think about myself.

[*Rises.*

Prince Sergius. What answer am I to take back?

Fedya (*very nervous*). Oh, tell them I'm quite at their disposal. (*Walking up and down.*) They want to marry, and there mustn't be anything in their way (*pause*); is that it? (*Stops walking very suddenly. Repeats.*) There mustn't be anything in their way—is that it?

Prince Sergius (*pause.* FEDYA *sits on table L.*). Yes.

When do you—when do you think—you'll—you'll have it ready? The evidence?

Fedya (*turns and looks at the Prince, suppressing a slight, strained smile*). Will a fortnight do?

Prince Sergius (*rising*). Yes, I am sure it will. (*Rises and crosses to* FEDYA.) May I say that you give them your word?

Fedya (*with some impatience*). Yes. Yes. (*Prince offers his hand.*) Good-bye, Prince Sergius. And again thanks.

[*Exit* PRINCE SERGIUS, *R. 1.* FEDYA *sits down in an attitude of deep thought.*

Why not? Why not? And it's good not to be ashamed——

[*Lights dim and out.*

CURTAIN

SCENE V

Private room in a cheap restaurant. FEDYA *is shown in by a shabby waiter.*

Waiter. This way, sir. No one will disturb you here. Here's the writing paper.

[*Starts to exit.*

Fedya (*as waiter starts to exit*). Bring me a bottle of champagne.

Waiter. Yes, sir.

[*Exits R. C.*

[FEDYA *sits at table L. C., and begins to write.* IVAN PETROVICH *appearing in the doorway R. C.*

Ivan. I'll come in, shall I?

Fedya (*sitting L. of table L. C. Very serious*). If you want to, but I'm awfully busy, and— (*seeing he has already entered*) Oh, all right, do come in.

Ivan Petrovich (*C.*). You're going to write an answer to their demand. I'll help you. I'll tell you what to say. Speak out. Say what you mean. It's straight from the shoulder. That's my system. (*Picks up box that* FEDYA *has placed on table—opens it and takes out a revolver.*) Hullo! What's this? Going to shoot yourself. Of course,

why not? I understand. They want to humiliate you, and you show them where the courage is—put a bullet through your head and heap coals of fire on theirs. I understand perfectly. (*The waiter enters with champagne on tray, pours a glass for* FEDYA, *then exits.* PETROVICH *takes up the glass of wine and starts to drink.* FEDYA *looks up from his writing.*) I understand everything and everybody, because I'm a genius.

Fedya. So you are, but——

Ivan Petrovich (*filling and lifting his glass*). Here's to your immortal journey. May it be swift and pleasant. Oh, I see it from your point of view. So why should I stop you? Life and death are the same to genius. I'm dead during life and I live after death. You kill yourself in order to make a few people miss you, but I—but I—am going to kill myself to make the whole *world* know what it lost. I won't hesitate or think about it. I'll just take the revolver—one, two—and all is over—um. But I am premature. My hour is not yet struck. (*He puts the revolver down.*) But I shall write nothing. The world will have to understand all by itself. (FEDYA *continues to write.*) The world, what is it but a mass of preposterous creatures, who crawl around through life, understanding nothing—nothing at all—do you hear me? (FEDYA *looks up, rather exasperated.*) Oh, I'm not talking to you. All this is between me and the cosmos. (*Pours himself out another drink.*) After all, what does humanity most lack? Appreciation for its geniuses. As it is, we're persecuted, tortured, racked, through a lifetime of perpetual agony, into the asylum or the grave. But no longer will I be their bauble. Humanity, hypocrite that you are—to hell with you.

[*Drinks wine.*

Fedya (*having finished his letter*). Oh, go away, please.

Ivan Petrovich. Away? (*With a gesture.*) Away? Me? (*With profound resolve.*) So be it. (*He leans over the table, faces* FEDYA.) I shall away. I'll not deter you from accomplishing what I also shall commit—all in its proper moment, however. Only I *should* like to say this——

Fedya. Later. Later. But now, listen, old man, give

this to the head waiter. (*Handing him some money.*) You understand?

Ivan Petrovich. Yes, but for God's sake wait for me to come back. (*Moves away.*) I've something rare to tell you, something you'll never hear in the next world—at least not till I get there—— Look here, shall I give him all this money?

Fedya. No, just what I owe him.

[*Exit* IVAN PETROVICH, *whistling.* FEDYA *sighs with a sense of relief, takes the revolver, cocks it, stands at mirror on wall up R., and puts it close to his temple. Then shivers, and lets his hand drop.*

I can't do it. I can't do it.

[*Pause.* MASHA *is heard singing.* MASHA *bursts into the room.*

Masha (*breathless*). I've been everywhere looking for you. To Popov's, Afremov's, then I guessed you'd be here. (*Crosses to him. Sees revolver, turns, faces him quickly, concealing it with her body, stands very tense and taut, looking at him.*) Oh, you fool! You hideous fool! Did you think you'd——

Fedya (*still completely unnerved*). Awful! It's been awful! I tried—— (*With a gesture of despair.*) I couldn't——

[*Crosses to table L. C.—leans against it.*

Masha (*puts her hand to her face as if terribly hurt*). As if *I* didn't exist. (*Crosses over to table L. C., puts down revolver.*) As if I weren't in your life at all. Oh, how godless you are! (*Brokenly.*) Tell me, tell me, what about all my love for you?

Fedya (*as if suddenly aware of a great fatigue*). I wanted to set them free. I promised to—and when the time came I couldn't.

Masha. And what about *me?* What about me?

Fedya. I thought you'd be free, too. Surely my torturing you can't make you happy.

Masha. Oh, I can look out for myself. Maybe I'd rather be unhappy, miserable, wretched with you every minute than even *think* of living without you.

Fedya (*up R.—half to himself*). If I'd finished just now, you would have cried bitterly perhaps, my Masha, but you would have lived past it.

Masha. Oh, damn you, don't be so sure I'd cry at all. Can't you even be sorry for me?

[*She tries to conceal her tears.*

Fedya. Oh God, I only wanted to make everybody happier.

Masha. Yourself happier, you mean.

Fedya (*smiling*). Would I have been happier to be dead now?

Masha (*sulkily*). I suppose *you* would. (*Suddenly in a tender voice, crossing to him.*) But, Fedya, do you *know* what you want? Tell me, what *do* you want?

Fedya (*R*). I want so many things.

Masha (*impatiently and clinging to him*). But what? What?

Fedya. First of all, I want to set them free. How can I lie? How can I crawl through the muck and filth of a divorce? I can't. (*Moves to end of table and stands there facing front.*) But I must set them free somehow. They're such good people, my wife and Victor. I can't bear having them suffer.

Masha (*R. of table L. C.—scornfully*). Where's the good in her if she left you?

Fedya. She didn't. I left her.

Masha. She made you *think* she'd be happier without you. But go on—— (*Impatiently.*) Blame yourself, what else.

Fedya. There's you, Masha. Young, lovely, awfully dear to me. If I stay alive, ah, where will you be?

Masha. Don't bother about me. You can't hurt me.

Fedya (*sighing*). But the big reason, the biggest reason of all, is *myself*. I'm just lost. Your father is right, my dear. I'm no good.

Masha (*crossing to him, at once tenderly and savagely*). I won't unfasten myself from you. I'll stick to you, no matter where you take me, no matter what you do. You're alive, terribly alive, and I love you. Fedya, drop all this horror.

Fedya. How can I?

Masha (*trying to project the very essence of her vitality into him*). Oh, you can, you can.

Fedya (*slowly*). When I look at you, I feel as though I could do anything.

Masha (*proudly, fondly*). My love, my love. You can do anything, get anywhere you want to. (FEDYA *moves away impatiently up R. She sees letter.*) So you have been writing to them—to tell them you'll kill yourself. You just told them you'd kill yourself, is that it? But you didn't say anything about a revolver. Oh, Fedya, let me think, there must be some way. Fedya—listen to me. Do you remember the day we all went to the picnic to the White Lakes with Mama and Afremov and the young Cossack officer? And you buried the bottles of wine in the sand to keep them cool while we went in bathing? Do you remember how you took my hands and drew me out beyond the waves till the water was quite silent and flashing almost up to our throats, and then suddenly it seemed as if there were nothing under our feet? We tried to get back. We couldn't and you shouted out, "Afremov," and if he hadn't been almost beside us and pulled us in—and how cross he was with you for forgetting that you couldn't swim, and after, how wonderful it was to stretch out safely on the sands in the sunlight. Oh, how nice every one was to us that day and you kept on being so sorry for forgetting you couldn't swim! And, Fedya, don't you see? Of course, she must know you can't swim. Oh, it's all getting as clear as daylight. You will send her this beautiful letter. Your clothes will be found on the river bank—but instead of being in the river you will be far away with me—Fedya, don't you see, don't you see? You will be dead to her, but alive for me. (*Embraces* FEDYA.)

[*The lights down and out.*

CURTAIN

Scene vi

The Protosovs' *drawing-room.* Karenin *and* Lisa.

Karenin (*sitting chair R.*). He's promised me definitely, and I'm sure he'll keep to it.

Lisa (*sitting chair R. C.*). I'm rather ashamed to confess it, Victor, but since I found out about this—this gypsy, I feel completely free of him. Of course, I am not in the least jealous, but knowing this makes me see that I owe him nothing more. Am I clear to you, I wonder?

Karenin (*coming closer to her*). Yes, dear, I think I'll always understand you.

Lisa (*smiling*). Don't interrupt me, but let me speak as I think. The thing that tortured me most was I seemed to love both of you at once, and that made me seem so indecent to myself.

Karenin (*incredulously amused*). You indecent?

Lisa (*continuing*). But since I've found out that there's another woman, that he doesn't need me any more, I feel free, quite free of him. And now I can say truthfully, I love you. Because everything is clear in my soul. My only worry is the divorce, and all the waiting to be gone through before we can—— Ah, that's torturing.

Karenin. Dearest, everything will be settled soon. After all, he's promised, and I've asked my secretary to go to him with the petition and not to leave until he's signed it. Really, sometimes, if I didn't know him as I do, I'd think he was trying on purpose to discomfort us.

Lisa. No. No. It's only the same weakness and honesty fighting together in him. He doesn't want to lie. However, I'm sorry you sent him money.

Karenin. If I hadn't, it might have delayed things.

Lisa. I know, but money seems so ugly.

Karenin (*slightly ruffled*). I hardly think it's necessary to be so delicate with Fedya.

Lisa. Perhaps, perhaps. (*Smiling.*) But don't you think we are becoming very selfish?

Karenin. Maybe. But it's all your fault, dear. After all, this hopelessness and waiting, to think of being happy at last! I suppose happiness does make us selfish.

Lisa. Don't believe you're alone in your happiness or selfishness. I am so filled with joy it makes me almost afraid. Misha's all right, your mother loves me, and above all, you are here, close to me, loving me as I love you.

Karenin (*bending over her and searching her eyes*). You're sure you've no regret?

Lisa. From the day I found out about that gypsy woman, my mind underwent a change that has set me free.

Karenin. You're sure?

[*Kissing her hands.*

Lisa (*passionately*). Darling, I've only one desire now, and that is to have you forget the past and love as I do.

[*Her little boy toddles in R., sees them and stops.*

[*To the child.*

Come here, my sweetheart.

[*He goes to her and she takes him on her knees.*

Karenin. What strange contradictory instincts and desires make up our beings!

Lisa. Why?

Karenin (*slowly*). I don't know. When I came back from abroad, knew I'd lost you, I was unhappy, terribly. Yet, it was enough for me to learn that you at least remembered me. Afterward, when we became friends, and you were kind to me, and into our friendship wavered a spark of something more than friendship, ah, I was almost happy! Only one thing tormented me: fear that such a feeling wronged Fedya. Afterwards when Fedya tortured you so, I saw I could help. Then a certain definite hope sprang up in me. And later, when he became impossible and you decided to leave him, and I showed you my heart for the first time, and you didn't say no, but went away in tears—then I was happy through and through. Then came the possibility of joining our lives. Mamma loved you. You told me you loved me, that Fedya was gone out of your heart, out of your life forever, and there was only, only me . . . Ah, Lisa, for what more could I ask! Yet the past tortured me. Awful fancies would flush up into my happiness, turning it all into hatred for your past.

Lisa (*interrupting reproachfully*). Victor!

Karenin. Forgive me, Lisa. I only tell you this because

I don't want to hide a single thought from you. I want you to know how bad I am, and what a weakness I've got to fight down. But don't worry, I'll get past it. It's all right, dear. (*He bends over, kissing the child on the head.*) And I love him, too.

Lisa. Dearest, I'm so happy. Everything has happened in my heart to make it as you'd wish.

Karenin. All?

Lisa. All, beloved, or I never could say so.

[*Enter the* NURSE *L. U.*

Nurse. Your secretary has come back.

[LISA *and* KARENIN *exchange glances.*

Lisa. Show him in here, nurse, and take Misha, will you?

Nurse. Come along, my pet. It's time for your rest.

[*Exit nurse with the little boy, R.*

Karenin (*gets up, walks to the door*). This will be Fedya's answer.

Lisa (*kissing Karenin*). At last, at last we shall know when. (*She kisses him.*)

[*Enter* VOZNESENSKY *L. U.*

Karenin. Well?

Secretary. He's not there, sir.

Karenin. Not there? He's not signed the petition, then?

Secretary. No. But here is a letter addressed to you and Elizaveta Protosova.

[*Takes letter from his pocket and gives it to* KARENIN.

Karenin (*interrupting angrily*). More excuses, more excuses. It's perfectly outrageous. How without conscience he is. Really, he has lost every claim to——

Lisa. But read the letter, dear; see what he says.

[KARENIN *opens the letter.*

Secretary. Shall you need me, sir?

Karenin. No. That's all. Thank you.

[*Exit* SECRETARY. KARENIN *reads the letter in growing astonishment and concern.* LISA *watches his face.*

(*Reading.*) "Lisa, Victor, I write you both without using terms of endearment, since I can't feel them, nor can I conquer a sense of bitterness and reproach, self-reproach prin-

cipally, when I think of you together in your love. I know, in spite of being the husband, I was also the barrier, preventing you from coming earlier to one another. C'est moi qui suis l'intrue. I stood in your way, I worried you to death. Yet I can't help feeling bitterly, coldly, toward you. In one way I love both of you, especially Lisa Lizenska, but in reality I am more than cold toward you. Yes, it's unjust, isn't it, but to change is impossible."

Lisa. What's all that for?

Karenin (*standing L. of table C., continuing*). "However, to the point. I am going to fulfill your wishes in perhaps a little different way from what you desire. To lie, to act a degrading comedy, to bribe women of the streets for evidence—the ugliness of it all disgusts me. I am a bad man, but this despicable thing I am utterly unable to do. My solution is after all the simplest. You must marry to be happy. I am the obstacle, consequently that obstacle must be removed."

Lisa (*R. of table*). Victor!

Karenin (*reading*). Must be removed? "By the time this letter reaches you, I shall no longer exist. All I ask you is to be happy, and whenever you think of me, think tender thoughts. God bless you both. Good-bye. FEDYA."

Lisa. He's killed himself!

Karenin (*going hurriedly up stage L. and calls off*). My secretary! Call back my secretary!

Lisa. Fedya! Fedya, darling!

Karenin. Lisa!

Lisa. It's not true! It's not true that I've stopped loving him! He's the only man in all the world I love! And now I've killed him! I've killed him as surely as if I'd murdered him with my own two hands!

Karenin. Lisa, for God's sake!

Lisa. Stop it! Don't come near me! Don't be angry with me, Victor. You see I, too, cannot lie!

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene I

A dirty, ill-lighted underground dive; people are lying around drinking, sleeping, playing cards and making love. Near the front a small table at which Fedya *sits; he is in rags and has fallen very low. By his side is* Petushkov, *a delicate spiritual man, with long yellow hair and beard. Both are rather drunk.*

Candle light is the only lighting in this Scene.

Petushkov (*R. C. of table C.*). I know. I know. Well, that's real love. So what happened then?

Fedya (*L. C. of table C., pensively*). You might perhaps expect a girl of our own class, tenderly brought up, to be capable of sacrificing for the man she loved, but this girl was a gypsy, reared in greed, yet she gave me the purest sort of self-sacrificing love. She'd have done anything for nothing. Such contrasts are amazing.

Petushkov. I see. In painting we call that value. Only to realize bright red fully when there is green around it. But that's not the point. What happened?

Fedya. Oh, we parted. I felt it wasn't right to go on taking, taking where I couldn't give. So one night we were having dinner in a little restaurant, I told her we'd have to say good-bye. My heart was so wrung all the time I could hardly help crying.

Petushkov. And she?

Fedya. Oh, she was awfully unhappy, but she knew I was right. So we kissed each other a long while, and she went back to her gypsy troupe—— (*Slowly.*) Maybe she was glad to go——

[*A pause.*

Petushkov. I wonder.

Fedya. Yes. The single good act of my soul was not ruining that girl.

Petushkov. Was it from pity?

Fedya. I sorry for *her?* Oh, never. Quite the contrary. I worshipped her unclouded sincerity, the energy of her clear, strong will, and God in Heaven, how she sang. And probably she is singing now, for some one else. Yes, I always looked up at her from beneath, as you do at some radiance in the sky. I loved her really. And now it's a tender beautiful memory.

Petushkov. I understand. It was ideal, and you left it like that.

Fedya (*ruminatingly*). And I've been attracted often, you know. Once I was in love with a grande dame, bestially in love, dog-like. Well, she gave me a rendezvous, and I didn't, couldn't, keep it, because suddenly I thought of her husband, and it made me feel sick. And you know, it's queer, that now, when I look back, instead of being glad that I was decent, I am as sorry as if I had sinned. But with Masha it's so different; I'm filled with joy that I've never soiled the brightness of my feeling for her. (*He points his finger at the floor.*) I may go much further down.

Petushkov (*interrupting*). I know so well what you mean. But where is she now?

Fedya. I don't know. I don't want to know. All that belongs to another life, and I couldn't bear to mix that life and this life.

[*A* Police Officer *enters from up R., kicks a man who is lying on the floor—walks down stage, looks at* Fedya *and* Petushkov, *then exits.*

Petushkov. Your life's wonderful. I believe you're a real idealist.

Fedya. No. It's awfully simple. You know among our class—I mean the class I was born in—there are only three courses: the first, to go into the civil service or join the army and make money to squander over your sensual appetites. And all that was appalling to me—perhaps because I couldn't do it. The second thing is to live to clear out, to destroy what is foul, to make way for the beautiful. But for that you've got to be a hero, and I'm not a hero. And the third is to forget it all—overwhelm it with music,

drown it with wine. That's what *I* did. And look (*he spreads his arms out*) where my singing led me to.

[*He drinks.*

Petushkov. And what about family life? The sanctity of the home and all that—I would have been awfully happy if I'd had a decent wife. As it was, she ruined me.

Fedya. I beg your pardon. Did you say marriage? Oh, yes, of course. Well, I've been married, too. Oh, my wife was quite an ideal woman. I don't know why I should say was, by the way, because she's still living. But there's something—I don't know; it's rather difficult to explain—— But you know how pouring champagne into a glass makes it froth up into a million iridescent little bubbles? Well, there was none of that in our married life. There was no fizz in it, no sparkle, no taste, phew! The days were all one color—flat and stale and gray as the devil. And that's why I wanted to get away and forget. You can't forget unless you play. So trying to play I crawled in every sort of muck there is. And you know, it's a funny thing, but we love people for the good we do them, and we hate them for the harm. That's why I hated Lisa. That's why she seemed to love me.

Petushkov. Why do you say seemed?

Fedya (*wistfully*). Oh, she couldn't creep into the center of my being like Masha. But that's not what I mean. Before the baby was born, and afterwards, when she was nursing him, I used to stay away for days and days, and come back drunk, drunk, and love her less and less each time, because I was wronging her so terribly. (*Excitedly.*) Yes. That's it, I never realized it before. The reason why I loved Masha was because I did her good, not harm. But I crucified my wife, and her contortions filled me almost with hatred.

[Fedya *drinks.*

Petushkov. I think I understand. Now in my case——

[Artimiev *enters R. U., approaches with a cockade on his cap, dyed mustache, and shabby, but carefully mended clothes.*

Artimiev (*stands L. of table*). Good appetite, gentle-

men! (*Bowing to* FEDYA.) I see you've made the acquaintance of our great artist.

Fedya (*coolly*). Yes, I have.

Artimiev (*to* PETUSHKOV). Have you finished your portrait?

Petushkov. No, they didn't give me the commission, after all.

Artimiev (*sitting down on end of table*). I'm not in your way, am I?

[FEDYA *and* PETUSHKOV *don't answer.*

Petushkov. This gentleman was telling me about his life.

Artimiev. Oh, secrets? Then I won't disturb you. Pardon me for interrupting. (*To himself as he moves away.*) Damn swine!

[*He goes to the next table, sits down and in the dim candlelight he can just be seen listening to the conversation.*

Fedya. I don't like that man.

Petushkov. I think he's offended.

Fedya. Let him be. I can't stand him. If he'd stayed I shouldn't have said a word. Now, it's different with you. *You* make me feel all comfortable, you know. Well, what was I saying?

Petushkov. You were talking about your wife. How did you happen to separate?

Fedya. Oh, that? (*A pause.*) It's a rather curious story. My wife's married.

Petushkov. Oh, I see! You're divorced.

Fedya. No. (*Smiling.*) She's a widow.

Petushkov. A widow? What do you mean?

Fedya. I mean exactly what I say. She's a widow. I don't exist.

Petushkov (*puzzled*). What?

Fedya (*smiling drunkenly*). I'm dead. You're talking to a corpse.

[ARTIMIEV *leans towards them and listens intently.*

Funny, I seem to be able to say anything to you. And it's so long ago, so long ago. And what is it after all to you but a story? Well, when I got to the climax of tor-

turing my wife, when I'd squandered everything I had or could get, and become utterly rotten, then, there appeared a protector.

Petushkov. The usual thing, I suppose?

Fedya. Don't think anything filthy about it. He was just her friend, mine too, a very good, decent fellow; in fact the opposite of myself. He'd known my wife since she was a child, and I suppose he'd loved her since then. He used to come to our house a lot. First I was very glad he did, then I began to see they were falling in love with each other, and then—an odd thing began to happen to me at night. Do you know when she lay there asleep beside me (*he laughs shrilly*) I would hear him, pushing open the door, crawling into the room, coming to me on his hands and knees, grovelling, whining, begging me (*he is almost shouting*) for her, for her, imagine it! And I, I had to get up and give my place to him. (*He covers his eyes with his hands in a convulsive moment.*) Phew! Then I'd come to myself.

Petushkov. God! It must have been horrible.

Fedya (*wearily*). Well, later on I left her—and after a while, they asked me for a divorce. I couldn't bear all the lying there was to be got through. Believe me it was easier to think of killing myself. And so I tried to commit suicide, and I tried and I couldn't. Then a kind friend came along and said, "Now, don't be foolish!" And she arranged the whole business for me. I sent my wife a farewell letter—and the next day my clothes and pocketbook were found on the bank of the river. Everybody knew I couldn't swim. (*Pause.*) You understand, don't you?

Petushkov. Yes, but what about the body? They didn't find that?

Fedya (*smiling drunkenly*). Oh yes, they did! You just listen! About a week afterwards some horror was dragged out of the water. My wife was called in to identify it. It was in pretty bad shape, you know. She took one glance. "Is that your husband?" they asked her. And she said, "Yes." Well, that settled it! I was buried, they were married, and they're living very happily right here in this city. I'm living here, too! We're all living here to-

gether! Yesterday I walked right by their house. The windows were lit and somebody's shadow went across the blind. (*A pause.*) Of course there're times when I feel like hell about it, but they don't last. The worst is when there's no money to buy drinks with.

[*He drinks.*

Artimiev (*rising and approaching them*). Excuse me, but you know I've been listening to that story of yours? It's a very good story, and what's more a very useful one. You say you don't like being without money, but really there's no need of your ever finding yourself in that position.

Fedya (*interrupting*). Look here, I wasn't talking to you and I don't need your advice!

Artimiev. But I'm going to give it to you just the same. Now you're a corpse. Well, suppose you come to life again!

Fedya. What?

Artimiev. Then your wife and that fellow she's so happy with—they'd be arrested for bigamy. The best they'd get would be ten years in Siberia. *Now* you see where you can have a steady income, don't you?

Fedya (*furiously*). Stop talking and get out of here!

Artimiev. The best way is to write them a letter. If you don't know how I'll do it for you. Just give me their address and afterwards when the ruble notes commence to drop in, how grateful you'll be!

Fedya. Get out! Get out, I say! I haven't told you anything!

Artimiev. Oh, yes, you have! Here's my witness! This waiter heard you saying you were a corpse!

Fedya (*beside himself*). You damn blackmailing beast——

[*Rising.*

Artimiev. Oh, I'm a beast, am I? We'll see about that! (FEDYA *rises to go,* ARTIMIEV *seizes him.*) Police! Police! (FEDYA *struggles frantically to escape.*)

[*The* POLICE *enter and drag him away.*

CURTAIN

Scene II

In the country. A veranda covered by a gay awning; sunlight; flowers; Sophia Karenina, Lisa, *her little boy and nurse.*

Lisa (*standing C. in door. To the little boy, smiling*). Who do you think is on his way from the station?

Misha (*excitedly*). Who? Who?

Lisa. Papa.

Misha (*rapturously*). Papa's coming! Papa's coming!

[*Exits L. through C. door.*

Lisa (*contentedly, to* Sophia Karenina). How much he loves Victor! As if he were his real father!

Sophia Karenina (*on sofa L. knitting—back to audience*). Tant mieux. Do you think he ever remembers his father?

Lisa (*sighing*). I can't tell. Of course I've never said anything to him. What's the use of confusing his little head? Yet sometimes I feel as though I ought. What do you think, Mamma?

Sophia Karenina. I think it's a matter of feeling. If you can trust your heart, let it guide you. What extraordinary adjustments death brings about! I confess I used to think very unkindly of Fedya, when he seemed a barrier to all this. (*She makes a gesture with her hand.*) But now I think of him as that nice boy who was my son's friend, and a man who was capable of sacrificing himself for those he loved. (*She knits.*) I hope Victor hasn't forgotten to bring me some wool.

Lisa. Here he comes. (Lisa *runs to the edge of the veranda.*) There's some one with him—a lady in a bonnet! Oh, it's mother! How splendid! I haven't seen her for an age!

[*Enter* Anna Pavlovna *up C.*

Anna Pavlovna (*kissing* Lisa). My darling. (*To* Sophia Karenina.) How do you do? Victor met me and insisted on my coming down.

[*Sits bench L. C. beside* Sophia.

Sophia Karenina. This is perfectly charming!

[*Enter* VICTOR *and* MISHA.

Anna Pavlovna. I did want to see Lisa and the boy. So now, if you don't turn me out, I'll stay till the evening train.

Karenin (*L. C., kissing his wife, his mother and the boy*). Congratulate me—everybody—I've a bit of luck. I don't have to go to town again for two days. Isn't that wonderful?

Lisa (*R. C.*). Two days! That's glorious! We'll drive over to the Hermitage to-morrow and show it to mother.

Anna Pavlovna (*holding the boy*). He's so like his father, isn't he? I do hope he hasn't inherited his father's disposition.

Sophia Karenina. After all, Fedya's heart was in the right place.

Lisa. Victor thinks if he'd only been brought up more carefully everything would have been different.

Anna Pavlovna. Well, I'm not so sure about that, but I do feel sorry for him. I can't think of him without wanting to cry.

Lisa. I know. That's how Victor and I feel. All the bitterness is gone. There's nothing left but a very tender memory.

Anna Pavlovna (*sighing*). I'm sure of it.

Lisa. Isn't it funny? It all seemed so hopeless back there, and now see how beautifully everything's come out!

Sophia Karenina. Oh, by the way, Victor, did you get my wool?

Karenin. I certainly did. (*Brings a bag and takes out parcels.*) Here's the wool, here's the eau-de-cologne, here are the letters—one on "Government Service" for you, Lisa —— (*Hands her the letter.* LISA *opens letter, then strolls R. reading it, suddenly stops.*) Well, Anna Pavlovna, I know you want to make yourself beautiful! I must tidy up, too. It's almost dinner time. Lisa, you've put your mother in the Blue Room, haven't you?

[*Pause.*

[LISA *is pale. She holds the letter with trembling hands and reads it,* KARENIN *seeing her.*

What's the matter, Lisa? What is it?

Lisa. He's alive. He's alive. My God! I shall never be free from him. (VICTOR *crosses to* LISA.) What does this mean? What's going to happen to us?

Karenin (*taking the letter and reading*). I don't believe it.

Sophia Karenina. What is it? (*Rising.*) What's the matter? Why don't you tell us?

Karenin. He's alive! They're accusing us of bigamy! It's a summons for Lisa to go before the Examining Magistrate.

Anna Pavlovna. No—no! It can't be!

Sophia Karenina. Oh, that horrible man!

Karenin. So it was all a lie!

Lisa (*with a cry of rage*). Oh! I hate him so! Victor!—Fedya!—— My God! I don't know what I'm saying. I don't know what I'm saying.

[*Sinks in chair down R.*

Anna Pavlovna (*rising*). He's not really *alive?*

[*Lights dim and out.*

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The room of the examining magistrate, who sits at a table talking to MELNIKOV, *a smartly dressed, languid, man-about-town.*

At a side-table a CLERK *is sorting papers.*

Magistrate (*sitting R. of table R. C.*). Oh, I never said so. It's her own notion. And now she is reproaching me with it.

Melnikov (*sitting C. back to audience*). She's not reproaching you, only her feelings are awfully hurt.

Magistrate. Are they? Oh, well, tell her I'll come to supper after the performance. But you'd better wait on. I've rather an interesting case. (*To the* CLERK.) Here, you, show them in.

Clerk (*sitting C. facing audience*). Both? Excellency.

Magistrate. No, only Madame Karenina.

[CLERK *exits L. 1.*

Clerk (*calling off stage*). Madame Protosova, Madame Protosova.

Magistrate. Or, to dot my i's, Madame Protosova.

Melnikov (*starting to go out*). Ah, it's the Karenin case.

Magistrate. Yes, and an ugly one. I'm just beginning the investigation. But I assure you it's a first-rate scandal already. Must you go? Well, see you at supper. Goodbye.

[*Exit* MELNIKOV, *R.*

[*The* CLERK *shows in* LISA; *she wears a black dress and veil.*

Magistrate. Please sit down, won't you? (*He points to a chair L. C.* LISA *sits down.*) I am extremely sorry that it's necessary to ask you questions.

[LISA *appears very much agitated.* MAGISTRATE *appears unconcerned and is reading a newspaper as he speaks.*

But please be calm. You needn't answer them unless you wish. Only in the interest of every one concerned, I advise you to help me reach the entire truth.

Lisa. I've nothing to conceal.

Magistrate (*looking at papers*). Let's see. Your name, station, religion. I've got all that. You are accused of contracting a marriage with another man, knowing your first husband to be alive.

Lisa. But I did not know it.

Magistrate (*continuing*). And also you are accused of having persuaded with bribes your first husband to commit a fraud, a pretended suicide, in order to rid yourself of him.

Lisa. All that's not true.

Magistrate. Then permit me to ask you these questions: Did you or did you not send him 1200 rubles in July of last year?

Lisa. That was his own money obtained from selling his things, which I sent to him during our separation, while I was waiting for my divorce.

Magistrate. Just so. Very well. When the police asked

you to identify the corpse, how were you sure it was your husband's?

Lisa. Oh, I was so terribly distressed that I couldn't bear to look at the body. Besides, I felt so sure it was he, and when they asked me, I just said yes.

Magistrate. Very good indeed. I can well understand your distraction, and permit me to observe, Madame, that although servants of the law, we remain human beings, and I beg you to be assured that I sympathize with your situation. You were bound to a spendthrift, a drunkard, a man whose dissipation caused you infinite misery.

Lisa (*interrupting*). Please, I loved him.

Magistrate (*tolerantly*). Of course. Yet naturally you desired to be free, and you took this simple course without counting the consequence, which is considered a crime, or bigamy. I understand you, and so will both judges and jury. And it's for this reason, Madam, I urge you to disclose the entire truth.

Lisa. I've nothing to disclose. I never have lied. (*She begins to cry.*) Do you want me any longer?

Magistrate. Yes. I must ask you to remain a few minutes longer. No more questions, however. (*To the* CLERK.) Show in Victor Karenin. (*To* LISA.) I think you'll find that a comfortable chair. (*Sits L. C.*)

[*Enter* KARENIN, *stern and solemn.*

Please sit down.

Karenin. Thank you. (*He remains standing L. U.*) What do you want from me?

Magistrate. I have to take your deposition.

Karenin. In what capacity?

Magistrate (*smiling*). In my capacity of investigating magistrate. You are here, you know, because you are charged with a crime.

Karenin. Really? What crime?

Magistrate. Bigamy, since you've married a woman already married. But I'll put the questions to you in their proper order. Sure you'll not sit down?

Karenin. Quite sure.

Magistrate (*writing*). Your name?

Karenin. Victor Karenin

Magistrate. Rank?

Karenin. Chamberlain of the Imperial Court.

Magistrate. Your age?

Karenin. Thirty-eight.

Magistrate. Religion?

Karenin. Orthodox, and I've never been tried before of any charge. (*Pause.*) What else?

Magistrate. Did you know that Fedor Protosov was alive when you married his wife?

Karenin. No, we were both convinced that he was drowned.

Magistrate. All right. And why did you send 1200 rubles to him a few days before he simulated death on July 17th?

Karenin. That money was given me by my wife.

Magistrate (*interrupting him*). Excuse me, you mean by *Madame* Protosova.

Karenin. By my wife to send to her husband. She considered this money his property, and having broken off all relations with him, felt it unjust to withhold it. What else do you want?

Magistrate. I don't want anything, except to do my official duty, and to aid you in doing yours, through causing you to tell me the whole truth, in order that your innocence be proved. You'd certainly better not conceal things which are sure to be found out, since Protosov is in such a weakened condition, physically and mentally, that he is certain to come out with the entire truth as soon as he gets into court, so from your point of view I advise . . .

Karenin. Please don't advise me, but remain within the limits of your official capacity. Are we at liberty to leave?

[*He goes to* LISA *who takes his arm.*

Magistrate. Sorry, but it's necessary to detain you. (KARENIN *looks around in astonishment.*) No, I've no intention of arresting you, although it might be a quicker way of reaching the truth. I merely want to take Protosov's deposition in your presence, to confront him with you, that you may facilitate your chances by proving his statements to be false. Kindly sit down. (*To* CLERK.) Show in Fedor Protosov.

[*There is a pause. The* CLERK *shows in* FEDYA *in*

rags, a total wreck. He enters slowly, dragging his feet. He catches sight of his wife, who is bowed in grief. For a moment he is about to take her in his arms—he hesitates—then stands before the MAGISTRATE.

Magistrate. I shall ask you to answer some questions.

Fedya (*rises, confronting the* MAGISTRATE). Ask them.

Magistrate. Your name?

Fedya. You know it.

Magistrate. Answer my questions exactly, please.

[*Rapping on his desk.*

Fedya (*shrugs*). Fedor Protosov.

Magistrate. Your rank, age, religion?

Fedya (*silent for a moment*). Aren't you ashamed to ask me these absurd questions? Ask me what you need to know, only that.

Magistrate. I shall ask you to take care how you express yourself.

Fedya. Well, since you're not ashamed. My rank, graduate of the University of Moscow; age 40; religion orthodox. What else?

Magistrate. Did Victor Karenin and Elizaveta Andreyevna know you were alive when you left your clothes on the bank of the river and disappeared?

Fedya. Of course not. I really wished to commit suicide. But—however, why should I tell you? The fact's enough. They knew nothing of it.

Magistrate. You gave a somewhat different account to the police officer. How do you explain that?

Fedya. Which police officer? Oh yes, the one who arrested me in that dive. I was drunk, and I lied to him—about what, I don't remember. But I'm not drunk now and I'm telling you the whole truth. They knew nothing; they thought I was dead, and I was glad of it. Everything would have stayed all right except for that damned beast Artimiev. So if any one's guilty, it's I.

Magistrate. I perceive you wish to be generous. Unfortunately the law demands the truth. Come, why did you receive money from them?

[FEDYA *is silent.*

Why don't you answer me? Do you realize that it will be stated in your deposition that the accused refused to answer these questions, and that will harm (*he includes* LISA *and* VICTOR *in a gesture*) all of you?

[FEDYA *remains silent.*

Aren't you ashamed of your stubborn refusal to aid these others and yourself by telling the entire truth?

Fedya (*breaking out passionately*). The truth—— Oh, God! what do you know about the truth? Your business is crawling up into a little power, that you may use it by tantalizing, morally and physically, people a thousand times better than you. . . . You sit there in your smug authority torturing people.

Magistrate. I must ask you——

Fedya (*interrupts him*). Don't ask me for I'll speak as I feel. (*Turning to* CLERK.) And you write it down. So for once some human words will get into a deposition.

[*Raising his voice, which ascends to a climax during this speech.*

There were three human beings alive: I, he, and she.

[*He turns to his wife with a gesture indicating his love for her. He pauses, then proceeds.*

We all bore towards one another a most complex relation. We were all engaged in a spiritual struggle beyond your comprehension: the struggle between anguish and peace; between falsehood and truth. Suddenly this struggle ended in a way that set us free. Everybody was at peace. They loved my memory, and I was happy even in my downfall, because I'd done what should have been done, and cleared away my weak life from interfering with their strong good lives. And yet we're all alive. When suddenly a bastard adventurer appears, who demands that I abet his filthy scheme. I drive him off as I would a diseased dog, but he finds you, the defender of public justice, the appointed guardian of morality, to listen to him. And you, who receive on the 20th of each month a few kopeks' gratuity for your wretched business, you get into your uniform, and in good spirits proceed to torture—bully people whose threshold you're not clean enough to pass. Then when you've had your fill of showing off your wretched power,

oh, then you are satisfied, and sit and smile there in your damned complacent dignity. And . . .

Magistrate (*raising his voice. Rising excitedly*). Be silent or I'll have you turned out.

Fedya. God! Who should *I* be afraid of! I'm dead, dead, and away out of your power. (*Suddenly overcome with the horror of the situation.*) What can you do to me? How can you punish me—a corpse?

[*Beating his breast.*

Magistrate. Be silent! (*To* CLERK, *who is down L.*) Take him out!

[FEDYA *turns, seeing his wife, he falls on his knees before her. . . . kisses the hem of her dress, crying bitterly.*

[*Slowly he rises, pulls himself together with a great effort, then exits L.*

[*The lights dim and out.*

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A corridor in the lower courts; in the background a door opposite which stands a GUARD; *to the right is another door through which the* PRISONERS *are conducted to the court.* IVAN PETROVICH *in rags enters L., goes to this last door, trying to pass through it.*

Guard (*at door R. C.*). Where do you think you're going, shoving in like that?

Ivan Petrovich. Why shouldn't I? The law says these sessions are public.

Guard. You can't get by and that's enough.

Ivan Petrovich (*in pity*). Wretched peasant, you have no idea to whom you are speaking.

Guard. Be silent!

[*Enter a* YOUNG LAWYER *from R. 1.*

Lawyer (*to Petrovich*). Are you here on business?

Ivan Petrovich. No. I'm the public. But this wretched peasant won't let me pass.

Lawyer. There's no room for the public at this trial.

Ivan Petrovich. Perhaps, but I am above the general rule.

Lawyer. Well, you wait outside; they'll adjourn presently.

[*He is just going into courtroom through door R. C. when* PRINCE SERGIUS *enters L. and stops him.*

Prince Sergius. How does the case stand?

Lawyer. The defense has just begun. Petrushin is speaking now.

Prince Sergius. Are the Karenins bearing up well?

Lawyer. Yes, with extraordinary dignity. They look as if they were the judges instead of the accused. That's felt all the way through, and Petrushin is taking advantage of it.

Prince Sergius. What of Protosov?

Lawyer. He's frightfully unnerved, trembling all over, but that's natural considering the sort of life he's led. Yes, he's all on edge, and he's interrupted both judge and jury several times already.

Prince Sergius. How do you think it will end?

Lawyer. Hard to say. The jury are mixed. At any rate I don't think they'll find the Karenins guilty of premeditation. Do you want to go in?

Prince Sergius. I should very much like to.

Lawyer. Excuse me, you're Prince Sergius Abreskov, aren't you? (*To the Prince.*) There's an empty chair just at the left.

[*The guard lets* PRINCE SERGIUS *pass.*

Ivan Petrovich. Prince! Bah! I am an aristocrat of the soul, and that's a higher title.

Lawyer. Excuse me.

[*And exits down R. C. into courtroom.*

[PETUSHKOV, FEDYA'S *companion in the dive, enters approaching* IVAN PETROVICH.

Petushkov (*R.*). Oh, there you are. Well, how're things going?

Ivan Petrovich (*L.*). The speeches for the defense have begun, but this ignorant rascal won't let us in. Curse his damned petty soul.

Guard (*C.*) Silence! Where do you think you are?

[*Further applause is heard; door of the court opens, and there is a rush of lawyers and the general public into the corridor.*

A Lady. Oh, it's simply wonderful! When he spoke I felt as if my heart were breaking.

An Officer. It's all far better than a novel. But I don't see how she could ever have loved him. Such a sinister, horrible figure.

[*The other door opens over L.; the accused comes out.*

The Lady (*this group is down R.*). Hush! There he is. See how wild he looks.

Fedya (*seeing* IVAN PETROVICH). Did you bring it?

[*Goes to* PETROVICH.

Petrovich. There.

[*He hands* FEDYA *something;* FEDYA *hides it in his pocket.*

Fedya (*seeing* PETUSHKOV). How foolish! How vulgar and how boring all this is, isn't it?

[*Men and women enter door L. and stand down L. watching.*

[*Enter* PETRUSHIN, *from R. C.,* FEDYA'S *counsel, a stout man with red cheeks; very animated.*

Petrushin (*rubbing his hands*). Well, well, my friend. It's going along splendidly. Only remember, don't go and spoil things for me in your last speech.

Fedya (*takes him by the arm*). Tell me, what'll the worst be?

Petrushin. I've already told you. Exile to Siberia.

Fedya. Who'll be exiled to Siberia?

Petrushin. You and your wife, naturally.

Fedya. And at the best?

Petrushin. Religious pardon and the annulment of the second marriage.

Fedya. You mean—that we should be bound again—to one another——

Petrushin. Yes. Only try to collect yourself. Keep up your courage. After all, there's no occasion for alarm.

Fedya. There couldn't be any other sentence, you're sure?

Petrushin. None other. None other.

[*Exits R. 1.* FEDYA *stands motionless.*

Guard (*crosses and exits L. 1. Calling*). Pass on. Pass on. No loitering in the corridor.

[VICTOR *and* LISA *enter from door L. Start to go off L. when pistol shot stops them.*

Fedya (*He turns his back to the audience, and from beneath his ragged coat shoots himself in the heart. There is a muffled explosion, smoke. He crumples up in a heap on the floor. All the people in the passage rush to him.*) (*In a very low voice.*) This time—it's well done. . . . Lisa. . . .

[*People are crowding in from all the doors, judges, etc.* LISA *rushes to* FEDYA, KARENIN, IVAN PETROVICH *and* PRINCE SERGIUS *follow.*

Lisa. Fedya! . . . Fedya! . . . What have you done? Oh why! . . . why! . . .

Fedya. Forgive me—— No other way—— Not for you—but for myself——

Lisa. You will live. You must live.

Fedya. No—no—— Good-bye—— (*He seems to smile, then he mutters just under his breath.*) Masha.

[*In the distance the gypsies are heard singing "No More at Evening." They sing until the curtain.*

You're too late——

[*Suddenly he raises his head from* LISA'S *knees, and barely utters as if he saw something in front of him.*

Ah. . . . Happiness! . . .

[*His head falls from* LISA'S *knees to the ground. She still clings to it, in grief and horror. He dies.*

[*The lights dim and out.*]

CURTAIN

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

OR

IF A CLAW IS CAUGHT THE BIRD IS LOST

CHARACTERS

PETER IGNÁTITCH. *A well-to-do peasant, 42 years old, married for the second time, and sickly.*
ANÍSYA. *His wife, 32 years old, fond of dress.*
AKOULÍNA. *Peter's daughter by his first marriage, 16 years old, hard of hearing, mentally undeveloped.*
NAN (ANNA PETRÓVNA). *His daughter by his second marriage, 10 years old.*
NIKÍTA. *Their laborer, 25 years old, fond of dress.*
AKÍM. *Nikíta's father, 50 years old, a plain-looking, God-fearing peasant.*
MATRYÓNA. *His wife and Nikíta's mother, 50 years old.*
MARÍNA. *An orphan girl, 22 years old.*
MARTHA. *Peter's sister.*
MÍTRITCH. *An old laborer, ex-soldier.*
SIMON. *Marína's husband.*
BRIDEGROOM. *Engaged to Akoulína.*
IVÁN. *His father.*
A NEIGHBOR.
FIRST GIRL.
SECOND GIRL.
POLICE OFFICER.
DRIVER.
BEST MAN.
MATCHMAKER.
VILLAGE ELDER.
VISITORS, WOMEN, GIRLS, AND PEOPLE *come to see the wedding.*

N.B.—The "oven" mentioned is the usual large, brick, Russian baking-oven. The top of it outside is flat, so that more than one person can lie on it.

ACT I

The Act takes place in autumn in a large village. The Scene represents PETER'S *roomy hut.* PETER *is sitting on a wooden bench, mending a horse-collar.* ANÍSYA *and* AKOULÍNA *are spinning, and singing a part-song.*

Peter (*looking out of the window*). The horses have got loose again. If we don't look out they'll be killing the colt. Nikíta! Hey, Nikíta! Is the fellow deaf? (*Listens. To the women.*) Shut up, one can't hear anything.

Nikíta (*from outside*). What?

Peter. Drive the horses in.

Nikíta. We'll drive 'em in. All in good time.

Peter (*shaking his head*). Ah, these laborers! If I were well, I'd not keep one on no account. There's nothing but bother with 'em. (*Rises and sits down again.*) Nikíta! . . . It's no good shouting. One of you'd better go. Go, Akoúl, drive 'em in.

Akoulína. What? The horses?

Peter. What else?

Akoulína. All right.

[*Exit.*

Peter. Ah, but he's a loafer, that lad . . . no good at all. Won't stir a finger if he can help it.

Anísya. You're so mighty brisk yourself. When you're not sprawling on the top of the oven you're squatting on the bench. To goad others to work is all you're fit for.

Peter. If one weren't to goad you on a bit, one'd have no roof left over one's head before the year's out. Oh, what people!

Anísya. You go shoving a dozen jobs on to one's shoulders, and then do nothing but scold. It's easy to lie on the oven and give orders.

Peter (*sighing*). Oh, if 'twere not for this sickness that's got hold of me, I'd not keep him on another day.

Akoulína (*off the scene*). Gee up, gee, woo.

[*A colt neighs, the stamping of horses' feet and the creaking of the gate are heard.*

Peter. Bragging, that's what he's good at. I'd like to sack him, I would indeed.

Anísya (*mimicking him*). "Like to sack him." You buckle to yourself, and then talk.

Akoulína (*enters*). It's all I could do to drive 'em in. That piebald always will . . .

Peter. And where's Nikíta?

Akoulína. Where's Nikíta? Why, standing out there in the street.

Peter. What's he standing there for?

Akoulína. What's he standing there for? He stands there jabbering.

Peter. One can't get any sense out of her! Who's he jabbering with?

Akoulína (*does not hear*). Eh, what?

[*Peter waves her off. She sits down to her spinning.*

Nan (*running in to her mother*). Nikíta's father and mother have come. They're going to take him away. It's true!

Anísya. Nonsense!

Nan. Yes. Blest if they're not! (*Laughing.*) I was just going by, and Nikíta, he says, "Good-bye, Anna Petróvna," he says, "you must come and dance at my wedding. I'm leaving you," he says, and laughs.

Anísya (*to her husband*). There now. Much he cares. You see, he wants to leave of himself. "Sack him" indeed!

Peter. Well, let him go. Just as if I couldn't find somebody else.

Anísya. And what about the money he's had in advance?

[*Nan stands listening at the door for awhile, and then exit.*

Peter (*frowning*). The money? Well, he can work it off in summer, anyhow.

Anísya. Well, of course you'll be glad if he goes and you've not got to feed him. It's only me as'll have to

work like a horse all the winter. That lass of yours isn't over fond of work either. And you'll be lying up on the oven. I know you.

Peter. What's the good of wearing out one's tongue before one has the hang of the matter?

Anísya. The yard's full of cattle. You've not sold the cow, and have kept all the sheep for the winter: feeding and watering 'em alone takes all one's time, and you want to sack the laborer. But I tell you straight, I'm not going to do a man's work! I'll go and lie on the top of the oven same as you, and let everything go to pot! You may do what you like.

Peter (*to Akoulína*). Go and see about the feeding, will you? it's time.

Akoulína. The feeding? All right.

[*Puts on a coat and takes a rope.*

Anísya. I'm not going to work for you. You go and work yourself. I've had enough of it, so there!

Peter. That'll do. What are you raving about? Like a sheep with the staggers!

Anísya. You're a crazy cur, you are! One gets neither work nor pleasure from you. Eating your fill, that's all you do, you palsied cur, you!

Peter (*spits and puts on coat*). Faugh! The Lord have mercy! I'd better go myself and see what's up.

[*Exit.*

Anísya (*after him*). Scurvy long-nosed devil!

Akoulína. What are you swearing at dad for?

Anísya. Hold your noise, you idiot!

Akoulína (*going to the door*). I know why you're swearing at him. You're an idiot yourself, you bitch. I'm not afraid of you.

Anísya. What do you mean? (*Jumps up and looks round for something to hit her with.*) Mind, or I'll give you one with the poker.

Akoulína (*opening the door*). Bitch! devil! that's what you are! Devil! bitch! bitch! devil!

[*Runs off.*

Anísya (*ponders*). "Come and dance at my wedding!" What new plan is this? Marry? Mind, Nikíta, if that's

your intention, I'll go and . . . No, I can't live without him. I won't let him go.

Nikíta (*enters, looks round, and, seeing Anísya alone, approaches quickly. In a low tone*). Here's a go; I'm in a regular fix! That governor of mine wants to take me away, —tells me I'm to come home. Says quite straight I'm to marry and live at home.

Anísya. Well, go and marry! What's that to me?

Nikíta. Is that it? Why, here am I reckoning how best to consider matters, and just hear her! She tells me to go and marry. Why's that? (*Winking.*) Has she forgotten?

Anísya. Yes, go and marry! What do I care?

Nikíta. What are you spitting for? Just see, she won't even let me stroke her. . . . What's the matter?

Anísya. This! That you want to play me false. . . . If you do,—why, I don't want you either. So now you know!

Nikíta. That'll do, Anísya. Do you think I'll forget you? Never while I live! I'll not play you false, that's flat. I've been thinking that supposing they do go and make me marry, I'd still come back to you. If only he don't make me live at home.

Anísya. Much need I'll have of you, once you're married.

Nikíta. There's a go now. How is it possible to go against one's father's will?

Anísya. Yes, I daresay, shove it all on your father. You know it's your own doing. You've long been plotting with that slut of yours, Marína. It's she has put you up to it. She didn't come here for nothing t'other day.

Nikíta. Marína? What's she to me? Much I care about her! . . . Plenty of them buzzing around.

Anísya. Then what has made your father come here? It's you have told him to. You've gone and deceived me.

[*Cries.*

Nikíta. Anísya, do you believe in a God or not? I never so much as dreamt of it. I know nothing at all about it. I never even dreamt of it—that's flat. My old dad has got it all out of his own pate.

Anísya. If you don't wish it yourself who can force you? He can't drive you like an ass.

Nikíta. Well, I reckon it's not possible to go against one's parent. But it's not by my wish.

Anísya. Don't you budge, that's all about it!

Nikíta. There was a fellow wouldn't budge, and the village elder gave him such a hiding. . . . That's what it might come to! I've no great wish for that sort of thing. They say it touches one up. . . .

Anísya. Shut up with your nonsense. Nikíta, listen to me: if you marry that Marína I don't know what I won't do to myself. . . . I shall lay hands on myself! I have sinned, I have gone against the law, but I can't go back now. If you go away I'll . . .

Nikíta. Why should I go? Had I wanted to go—I should have gone long ago. There was Iván Semyónitch t'other day—offered me a place as his coachman. . . . Only fancy what a life that would have been! But I did not go. Because, I reckon, I am good enough for any one. Now if you did not love me it would be a different matter.

Anísya. Yes, and that's what you should remember. My old man will die one of these fine days, I'm thinking; then we could cover our sin, make it all right and lawful, and then you'll be master here.

Nikíta. Where's the good of making plans? What do I care? I work as hard as if I were doing it for myself. My master loves me, and his missus loves me. And if the wenches run after me, it's not my fault, that's flat.

Anísya. And you'll love me?

Nikíta (*embracing her*). There, as you have ever been in my heart . . .

Matryóna (*enters and crosses herself a long time before the icón. Nikíta and Anísya step apart*). What I saw I didn't perceive, what I heard, I didn't hearken to. Playing with the lass, eh? Well,—even a calf will play. Why shouldn't one have some fun when one's young? But your master is out in the yard a-calling you, sonny.

Nikíta. I only came to get the axe.

Matryóna. I know, sonny, I know; them sort of axes are mostly to be found where the women are.

Nikíta (*stooping to pick up axe*). I say, mother, is it true you want me to marry? As I reckon, that's quite unnecessary. Besides, I've got no wish that way.

Matryóna. Eh, honey! why should you marry? Go on as you are. It's all the old man. You'd better go, sonny; we can talk these matters over without you.

Nikíta. It's a queer go! One moment I'm to be married, the next, not. I can't make head or tail of it.

[*Exit.*

Anísya. What's it all about, then? Do you really wish him to get married?

Matryóna. Eh, why should he marry, my jewel? It's all nonsense, all my old man's drivel. "Marry, marry." But he's reckoning without his host. You know the saying, "From oats and hay, why should horses stray?" When you've enough to spare, why look elsewhere? And so in this case. (*Winks.*) Don't I see which way the wind blows?

Anísya. Where's the good of my pretending to you, Mother Matryóna? You know all about it. I have sinned. I love your son.

Matryóna. Dear me, here's news! D'you think Mother Matryóna didn't know? Eh, lassie,—Mother Matryóna's been ground, and ground again, ground fine! This much I can tell you, my jewel: Mother Matryóna can see through a brick wall three feet thick. I know it all, my jewel! I know what young wives need sleeping draughts for, so I've brought some along.

[*Unties a knot in her handkerchief and brings out paper-packets.*

As much as is wanted, I see, and what's not wanted I neither see nor perceive! There! Mother Matryóna has also been young. I had to know a thing or two to live with my old fool. I know seventy-and-seven dodges. But I see your old man's quite seedy, quite seedy! How's one to live with such as him? Why, if you pricked him with a hay-fork it wouldn't fetch blood. See if you don't bury him before the spring. Then you'll need some one in the house. Well, what's wrong with my son? He'll do as well as another. Then where's the advantage of my taking him away from a good place? Am I my child's enemy?

Anísya. Oh, if only he does not go away!

Matryóna. He won't go away, birdie. It's all nonsense. You know my old man. His wits are always wool-gathering; yet sometimes he takes a thing into his pate, and it's as if it were wedged in, you can't knock it out with a hammer.

Anísya. And what started this business?

Matryóna. Well, you see, my jewel, you yourself know what a fellow with women the lad is,—and he's handsome too, though I say it as shouldn't. Well, you know, he was living at the railway, and they had an orphan wench there to cook for them. Well, that same wench took to running after him.

Anísya. Marína?

Matryóna. Yes, the plague seize her! Whether anything happened or not, anyhow something got to my old man's ears. Maybe he heard from the neighbors, maybe she's been and blabbed . . .

Anísya. Well, she is a bold hussy!

Matryóna. So my old man—the old blockhead—off he goes: "Marry, marry," he says, "he must marry her and cover the sin," he says. "We must take the lad home," he says, "and he shall marry," he says. Well, I did my best to make him change his mind, but, dear me, no. So, all right, thinks I,—I'll try another dodge. One always has to entice them fools in this way, just pretend to be of their mind, and when it comes to the point one goes and turns it all one's own way. You know, a woman has time to think seventy-and-seven thoughts while falling off the oven, so how's such as he to see through it? "Well, yes," says I, "it would be a good job,—only we must consider well beforehand. Why not go and see our son, and talk it over with Peter Ignátitch and hear what he has to say?" So here we are.

Anísya. Oh dear, oh dear, how will it all end? Supposing his father just orders him to marry her?

Matryóna. Orders, indeed! Chuck his orders to the dogs! Don't you worry; that affair will never come off. I'll go to your old man myself, and sift and strain this matter clear—there will be none of it left. I have come here

only for the look of the thing. A very likely thing! Here's my son living in happiness and expecting happiness, and I'll go and match him with a slut! No fear, I'm not a fool!

Anísya. And she—this Marína—came dangling after him here! Mother, would you believe, when they said he was going to marry, it was as if a knife had gone right through my heart. I thought he cared for her.

Matryóna. Oh, my jewel! Why, you don't think him such a fool, that he should go and care for a homeless baggage like that? Nikíta is a sensible fellow, you see. He knows whom to love. So don't you go and fret. my jewel. We'll not take him away, and we won't marry him. No, we'll let him stay on, if you'll only oblige us with a little money.

Anísya. All I know is, that I could not live if Nikíta went away.

Matryóna. Naturally, when one's young it's no easy matter! You, a wench in full bloom, to be living with the dregs of a man like that husband of yours.

Anísya. Mother Matryóna, would you believe it? I'm that sick of him, that sick of this long-nosed cur of mine, I can hardly bear to look at him.

Matryóna. Yes, I see, it's one of them cases. Just look here. (*Looks round and whispers.*) I've been to see that old man, you know he's given me simples of two kinds. This, you see, is a sleeping draught. "Just give him one of these powders," he says, "and he'll sleep so sound you might jump on him!" And this here, "This is that kind of simple," he says, "that if you give one some of it to drink it has no smell whatever, but its strength is very great. There are seven doses here, a pinch at a time. Give him seven pinches," he says, "and she won't have far to look for freedom," he says.

Anísya. O-o-oh! What's that?

Matryóna. "No sign whatever," he says. He's taken a rouble for it. "Can't sell it for less," he says. Because it's no easy matter to get 'em, you know. I paid him, dearie, out of my own money. If she takes them, thinks I, it's all right; if she don't, I can let old Michael's daughter have them.

Anísya. O-o-oh! But mayn't some evil come of them? I'm frightened!

Matryóna. What evil, my jewel? If your old man was hale and hearty, 'twould be a different matter, but he's neither alive nor dead as it is. He's not for this world. Such things often happen.

Anísya. O-o-oh, my poor head! I'm afeared, Mother Matryóna, lest some evil come of them. No. That won't do.

Matryóna. Just as you like. I might even return them to him.

Anísya. And are they to be used in the same way as the others? Mixed in water?

Matryóna. Better in tea, he says. "You can't notice anything," he says, "no smell nor nothing." He's a cute old fellow, too.

Anísya (*taking the powder*). O-oh, my poor head! Could I have ever thought of such a thing if my life were not a very hell?

Matryóna. You'll not forget that rouble? I promised to take it to the old man. He's had some trouble, too.

Anísya. Of course?

[*Goes to her box and hides the powders.*

Matryóna. And now, my jewel, keep it as close as you can, so that no one should find it out. Heaven defend that it should happen, but *if* any one notices it, tell 'em it's for the black-beetles. (*Takes the rouble.*) It's also used for beetles. (*Stops short.*)

[*Enter* AKÍM, *who crosses himself in front of the icón, and then* PETER, *who sits down.*

Peter. Well, then, how's it to be, Daddy Akím?

Akím. As it's best, Peter Ignátitch, as it's best . . . I mean—as it's best. 'Cos why? I'm afeared of what d'you call 'ems, some tomfoolery, you know. I'd like to, what d'you call it . . . to start, you know, start the lad honest, I mean. But supposing you'd rather, what d'you call it, we might, I mean, what's name? As it's best . . .

Peter. All right. All right. Sit down and let's talk it over. (*Akím sits down.*) Well, then, what's it all about? You want him to marry?

Matryóna. As to marrying, he might bide a while, Peter Ignátitch. You know our poverty, Peter Ignátitch. What's he to marry on? We've hardly enough to eat ourselves. How can he marry then? . . .

Peter. You must consider what will be best.

Matryóna. Where's the hurry for him to get married? Marriage is not that sort of thing, it's not like ripe raspberries that drop off if not picked in time.

Peter. If he were to get married, 'twould be a good thing in a way.

Akím. We'd like to . . . what d'you call it? 'Cos why, you see. I've what d'you call it . . . a job. I mean, I've found a paying job in town, you know.

Matryóna. And a fine job too—cleaning out cesspools. The other day when he came home, I could do nothing but spew and spew. Faugh!

Akím. It's true, at first it does seem what d'you call it . . . knocks one clean over, you know,—the smell, I mean. But one gets used to it, and then it's nothing, no worse than malt grain, and then it's, what d'you call it, . . . pays, pays, I mean. And as to the smell being, what d'you call it, it's not for the likes of us to complain. And one changes one's clothes. So we'd like to take what's his name . . . Nikíta, I mean, home. Let him manage things at home while I, what d'you call it,—earn something in town.

Peter. You want to keep your son at home? Yes, that would be well: but how about the money he has had in advance?

Akím. That's it, that's it! It's just as you say, Ignátitch, it's just what d'you call it. 'Cos why? If you go into service, it's as good as if you had sold yourself, they say. That will be all right. I mean he may stay and serve his time, only he must, what d'you call it, get married. I mean—so: you let him off for a little while, that he may, what d'you call it?

Peter. Yes, we could manage that.

Matryóna. Ah, but it's not yet settled between ourselves, Peter Ignátitch. I'll speak to you as I would before God, and you may judge between my old man and me. He goes

on harping on that marriage. But just ask—who it is he wants him to marry. If it were a girl of the right sort now—— I am not my child's enemy, but the wench is not honest.

Akím. No, that's wrong! Wrong, I say. 'Cos why? She, that same girl—it's my son as has offended, offended the girl I mean.

Peter. How offended?

Akím. That's how. She's what d'you call it, with him, with my son, Nikíta. With Nikíta, what d'you call it, I mean.

Matryóna. You wait a bit, my tongue runs smoother—let me tell it. You know, this lad of ours lived at the railway before he came to you. There was a girl there as kept dangling after him. A girl of no account, you know; her name's Marína. She used to cook for the men. So now this same girl accuses our son, Nikíta, that he, so to say, deceived her.

Peter. Well, there's nothing good in that.

Matryóna. But she's no honest girl herself; she runs after the fellows like a common slut.

Akím. There you are again, old woman, and it's not at all what d'you call it, it's all not what d'you call it, I mean . . .

Matryóna. There now, that's all the sense one gets from my old owl—"what d'you call it, what d'you call it," and he doesn't know himself what he means. Peter Ignátitch, don't listen to me, but go yourself and ask any one you like about the girl, everybody will say the same. She's just a homeless good-for-nothing.

Peter. You know, Daddy Akím, if that's how things are, there's no reason for him to marry her. A daughter-in-law's not like a shoe, you can't kick her off.

Akím (*excitedly*). It's false, old woman, it's what d'you call it, false; I mean, about the girl; false! 'Cos why? The lass is a good lass, a very good lass, you know. I'm sorry, sorry for the lassie, I mean.

Matryóna. It's an old saying: "For the wide world old Miriam grieves, and at home without bread her children she leaves." He's sorry for the girl, but not sorry for his own

son! Sling her round your neck and carry her about with you! That's enough of such empty cackle!

Akím. No, it's not empty.

Matryóna. There, don't interrupt, let me have my say.

Akím (*interrupts*). No, not empty! I mean, you twist things your own way, about the lass or about yourself. Twist them, I mean, to make it better for yourself; but God, what d'you call it, turns them His way. That's how it is.

Matryóna. Eh! One only wears out one's tongue with you.

Akím. The lass is hard-working and spruce, and keeps everything round herself . . . what d'you call it. And in our poverty, you know, it's a pair of hands, I mean; and the wedding needn't cost much. But the chief thing's the offence, the offence to the lass, and she's a what d'you call it, an orphan, you know; that's what she is, and there's the offence.

Matryóna. Eh! they'll all tell you a tale of that sort . . .

Anísya. Daddy Akím, you'd better listen to us women; we can tell you a thing or two.

Akím. And God, how about God? Isn't she a human being, the lass? A what d'you call it,—also a human being I mean, before God. And how do you look at it?

Matryóna. Eh! . . . started off again? . . .

Peter. Wait a bit, Daddy Akím. One can't believe all these girls say, either. The lad's alive, and not far away; send for him, and find out straight from him if it's true. He won't wish to lose his soul. Go and call the fellow, (*Anísya rises*) and tell him his father wants him.

[*Exit* Anísya.

Matryóna. That's right, dear friend; you've cleared the way clean, as with water. Yes, let the lad speak for himself. Nowadays, you know, they'll not let you force a son to marry; one must first of all ask the lad. He'll never consent to marry her and disgrace himself, not for all the world. To my thinking, it's best he should go on living with you and serving you as his master. And we need not take him home for the summer either; we can hire a help.

If you would only give us ten roubles now, we'll let him stay on.

Peter. All in good time. First let us settle one thing before we start another.

Akim. You see, Peter Ignátitch, I speak. 'Cos why? you know how it happens. We try to fix things up as seems best for ourselves, you know; and as to God, we what d'you call it, we forget Him. We think it's best so, turn it our own way, and lo! we've got into a fix, you know. We think it will be best, I mean; and lo! it turns out much worse—without God, I mean.

Peter. Of course one must not forget God.

Akim. It turns out worse! But when it's the right way—God's way—it what d'you call it, it gives one joy; seems pleasant, I mean. So I reckon, you see, get him, the lad, I mean, get him to marry her, to keep him from sin, I mean, and let him what d'you call it at home, as it's lawful, I mean, while I go and get the job in town. The work is of the right sort—it's payin', I mean. And in God's sight it's what d'you call it—it's best, I mean. Ain't she an orphan? Here, for example, a year ago some fellows went and took timber from the steward,—thought they'd do the steward, you know. Yes, they did the steward, but they couldn't what d'you call it—do God, I mean. Well, and so . . .

[*Enter* NIKÍTA *and* NAN.

Nikíta. You called me?

[*Sits down and takes out his tobacco-pouch.*

Peter (*in a low, reproachful voice*). What are you thinking about—have you no manners? Your father is going to speak to you, and you sit down and fool about with tobacco. Come, get up!

[NIKÍTA *rises, leans carelessly with his elbow on the table, and smiles.*

Akim. It seems there's a complaint, you know, about you, Nikíta—a complaint, I mean, a complaint.

Nikíta. Who's been complaining?

Akim. Complaining? It's a maid, an orphan maid, complaining, I mean. It's her, you know—a complaint against you, from Marína, I mean.

Nikíta (*laughs*). Well, that's a good one. What's the complaint? And who's told you—she herself?

Akím. It's I am asking you, and you must now, what d'you call it, give me an answer. Have you got mixed up with the lass, I mean—mixed up, you know?

Nikíta. I don't know what you mean. What's up?

Akím. Foolin', I mean, what d'you call it? foolin'. Have you been foolin' with her, I mean?

Nikíta. Never mind what's been! Of course one does have some fun with a cook now and then to while away the time. One plays the concertina and gets her to dance. What of that?

Peter. Don't shuffle, Nikíta, but answer your father straight out.

Akím (*solemnly*). You can hide it from men but not from God, Nikíta. You, what d'you call it—think, I mean, and don't tell lies. She's an orphan; so, you see, any one is free to insult her. An orphan, you see. So you should say what's rightest.

Nikíta. But what if I have nothing to say? I have told you everything—because there isn't anything to tell, that's flat! (*Getting excited.*) She can go and say anything about me, same as if she was speaking of one as is dead. Why don't she say anything about Fédka Mikíshin? Besides, how's this, that one mayn't even have a bit of fun nowadays? And as for her, well, she's free to say anything she likes.

Akím. Ah, Nikíta, mind! A lie will out. Did anything happen?

Nikíta (*aside*). How he sticks to it; it's too bad. (*To Akím.*) I tell you, I know nothing more. There's been nothing between us. (*Angrily.*) By God! and may I never leave this spot (*crosses himself*) if I know anything about it. (*Silence. Then still more excitedly.*) Why! have you been thinking of getting me to marry her? What do you mean by it?—it's a confounded shame. Besides, nowadays you've got no such rights as to force a fellow to marry. That's plain enough. Besides, haven't I sworn I know nothing about it?

Matryóna (*to her husband*). There now, that's just like

your silly pate, to believe all they tell you. He's gone and put the lad to shame all for nothing. The best thing is to let him live as he is living, with his master. His master will help us in our present need, and give us ten roubles, and when the time comes . . .

Peter. Well, Daddy Akím, how's it to be?

Akím (*looks at his son, clicking his tongue disapprovingly*). Mind, Nikíta, the tears of one that's been wronged never, what d'you call it—never fall beside the mark but always on, what's name—the head of the man as did the wrong. So mind, don't what d'you call it.

Nikíta (*sits down*). What's there to mind? mind yourself.

Nan (*aside*). I must run and tell mother.

[*Exit.*

Matryóna (*to Peter*). That's always the way with this old mumbler of mine, Peter Ignátitch. Once he's got anything wedged in his pate there's no knocking it out. We've gone and troubled you all for nothing. The lad can go on living as he has been. Keep him; he's your servant.

Peter. Well, Daddy Akím, what do you say?

Akím. Why, the lad's his own master, if only he what d'you call it. . . . I only wish that, what d'you call it, I mean.

Matryóna. You don't know yourself what you're jawing about. The lad himself has no wish to leave. Besides, what do we want with him at home? We can manage without him.

Peter. Only one thing, Daddy Akím—if you are thinking of taking him back in summer, I don't want him here for the winter. If he is to stay at all, it must be for the whole year.

Matryóna. And it's for a year he'll bind himself. If we want help when the press of work comes, we can hire help, and the lad shall remain with you. Only give us ten roubles now. . . .

Peter. Well then, is it to be for another year?

Akím (*sighing*). Yes, it seems, it what d'you call it . . . if it's so, I mean, it seems that it must be what d'you call it.

Matryóna. For a year, counting from St. Dimítry's day. We know you'll pay him fair wages. But give us ten roubles now. Help us out of our difficulties. (*Gets up and bows to Peter.*)

[*Enter* NAN *and* ANÍSYA. *The latter sits down at one side.*

Peter. Well, if that's settled we might step across to the inn and have a drink. Come, Daddy Akím, what do you say to a glass of vódka?

Akím. No, I never drink that sort of thing.

Peter. Well, you'll have some tea?

Akím. Ah, tea! yes, I do sin that way. Yes, tea's the thing.

Peter. And the women will also have some tea. Come. And you, Nikíta, go and drive the sheep in and clear away the straw.

Nikíta. All right. (*Exeunt all but* NIKÍTA. NIKÍTA *lights a cigarette. It grows darker.*) Just see how they bother one. Want a fellow to tell 'em how he larks about with the wenches! It would take long to tell 'em all those stories —"Marry her," he says. Marry them all! One would have a good lot of wives! And what need have I to marry? Am as good as married now! There's many a chap as envies me. Yet how strange it felt when I crossed myself before the icón. It was just as if some one shoved me. The whole web fell to pieces at once. They say it's frightening to swear what's not true. That's all humbug. It's all talk, that is. It's simple enough.

Akoulína (*enters with a rope, which she puts down. She takes off her outdoor things and goes into closet*). You might at least have got a light.

Nikíta. What, to look at you? I can see you well enough without.

Akoulína. Oh, bother you!

[NAN *enters and whispers to* NIKÍTA.

Nan. Nikíta, there's a person wants you. There is!

Nikíta. What person?

Nan. Marína from the railway; she's out there, round the corner.

Nikíta. Nonsense!

Nan. Blest if she isn't!

Nikíta. What does she want?

Nan. She wants you to come out. She says, "I only want to say a word to Nikíta." I began asking, but she won't tell, but only says, "Is it true he's leaving you?" And I say, "No, only his father wanted to take him away and get him to marry, but he won't, and is going to stay with us another year." And she says, "For goodness' sake send him out to me. I must see him," she says, "I must say a word to him somehow." She's been waiting a long time. Why don't you go?

Nikíta. Bother her! What should I go for?

Nan. She says, "If he don't come, I'll go into the hut to him." Blest if she didn't say she'd come in!

Nikíta. Not likely. She'll wait a bit and then go away.

Nan. "Or is it," she says, "that they want him to marry Akoulína?"

[*Re-enter* AKOULÍNA, *passing near* NIKÍTA *to take her distaff.*

Akoulína. Marry whom to Akoulína?

Nan. Why, Nikíta.

Akoulína. A likely thing! Who says it?

Nikíta (*looks at her and laughs*). It seems people do say it. Would you marry me, Akoulína?

Akoulína. Who, you? Perhaps I might have afore, but I won't now.

Nikíta. And why not now?

Akoulína. 'Cos you wouldn't love me.

Nikíta. Why not?

Akoulína. 'Cos you'd be forbidden to.

[*Laughs.*

Nikíta. Who'd forbid it?

Akoulína. Who? My step-mother. She does nothing but grumble, and is always staring at you.

Nikíta (*laughing*). Just hear her! Ain't she cute?

Akoulína. Who? Me? What's there to be cute about? Am I blind? She's been rowing and rowing at dad all day. The fat-muzzled witch!

[*Goes into closet.*

Nan (*looking out of the window*). Look, Nikíta, she's

coming! I'm blest if she isn't! I'll go away. [*Exit.*]

Marína (*enters*). What are you doing with me?

Nikíta. Doing? I'm not doing anything.

Marína. You mean to desert me.

Nikíta (*gets up angrily*). What does this look like, your coming here?

Marína. Oh, Nikíta!

Nikíta. Well, you are strange! What have you come for?

Marína. Nikíta!

Nikíta. That's my name. What do you want with Nikíta? Well, what next? Go away, I tell you!

Marína. I see, you do want to throw me over.

Nikíta. Well, and what's there to remember? You yourself don't know. When you stood out there round the corner and sent Nan for me, and I didn't come, wasn't it plain enough that you're not wanted? It seems pretty simple. So there—go!

Marína. Not wanted! So now I'm not wanted! I believed you when you said you would love me. And now that you've ruined me, I'm not wanted.

Nikíta. Where's the good of talking? This is quite improper. You've been telling tales to father. Now, do go away, will you?

Marína. You know yourself I never loved any one but you. Whether you married me or not, I'd not have been angry. I've done you no wrong, then why have you left off caring for me? Why?

Nikíta. Where's the use of baying at the moon? You go away. Goodness me! what a duffer!

Marína. It's not that you deceived me when you promised to marry me that hurts, but that you've left off loving. No, it's not that you've stopped loving me either, but that you've changed me for another, that's what hurts. I know who it is!

Nikíta (*comes up to her viciously*). Eh! what's the good of talking to the likes of you, that won't listen to reason? Be off, or you'll drive me to do something you'll be sorry for.

Marína. What, will you strike me, then? Well then,

strike me! What are you turning away for? Ah, Nikíta!

Nikíta. Supposing some one came in. Of course, it's quite improper. And what's the good of talking?

Marína. So this is the end of it! What has been has flown. You want me to forget it? Well then, Nikíta, listen. I kept my maiden honor as the apple of my eye. You have ruined me for nothing, you have deceived me. You have no pity on a fatherless and motherless girl! (*Weeping.*) You have deserted, you have killed me, but I bear you no malice. God forgive you! If you find a better one you'll forget me, if a worse one you'll remember me. Yes, you will remember, Nikíta! Good-bye, then, if it is to be. Oh, how I loved you! Good-bye for the last time.

[*Takes his head in her hands and tries to kiss him.*

Nikíta (*tossing his head back*). I'm not going to talk with the likes of you. If you won't go away I will, and you may stay here by yourself.

Marína (*screams*). You are a brute. (*In the doorway.*) God will give you no joy.

[*Exit, crying.*

Akoulína (*comes out of closet*). You're a dog, Nikíta!

Nikíta. What's up?

Akoulína. What a cry she gave!

[*Cries.*

Nikíta. What's up with you?

Akoulína. What's up? You've hurt her so. That's the way you'll hurt me also. You're a dog.

[*Exit into closet.*

[*Silence.*

Nikíta. Here's a fine muddle. I'm as sweet as honey on the lasses, but when a fellow's sinned with 'em it's a bad look-out!

CURTAIN

ACT II

The scene represents the village street. To the left the outside of PETER'S *hut, built of logs, with a porch in the middle; to the right of the hut the gates and a corner of the yard buildings.* ANÍSYA *is beating hemp in the street near the corner of the yard. Six months have elapsed since the First Act.*

Anísya (*stops and listens*). Mumbling something again. He's probably got off the stove.

[AKOULÍNA *enters, carrying two pails on a yoke.*

Anísya. He's calling. You go and see what he wants, kicking up such a row.

Akoulína. Why don't you go?

Anísya. Go, I tell you!

(*Exit* AKOULÍNA *into hut.*) He's bothering me to death. Won't let out where the money is, and that's all about it. He was out in the passage the other day. He must have been hiding it there. Now, I don't know myself where it is. Thank goodness he's afraid of parting with it, so that at least it will stay in the house. If only I could manage to find it. He hadn't it on him yesterday. Now I don't know where it can be. He has quite worn the life out of me.

[*Enter* AKOULÍNA, *tying her kerchief over her head.*

Anísya. Where are you off to?

Akoulína. Where? Why, he's told me to go for Aunt Martha. "Fetch my sister," he says. "I am going to die," he says. "I have a word to say to her."

Anísya (*aside*). Asking for his sister? Oh, my poor head! Sure he wants to give it her. What shall I do? Oh! (*To* AKOULÍNA.) Don't go! Where are you off to?

Akoulína. To call Aunt.

Anísya. Don't go I tell you, I'll go myself. You go

and take the clothes to the river to rinse. Else you'll not have finished by the evening.

Akoulína. But he told me to go.

Anísya. You go and do as you're bid. I tell you I'll fetch Martha myself. Take the shirts off the fence.

Akoulína. The shirts? But maybe you'll not go. He's given the order.

Anísya. Didn't I say I'd go? Where's Nan?

Akoulína. Nan? Minding the calves.

Anísya. Send her here. I dare say they'll not run away.

[AKOULÍNA *collects the clothes, and exit.*

Anísya. If one doesn't go he'll scold. If one goes he'll give the money to his sister. All my trouble will be wasted. I don't myself know what I'm to do. My poor head's splitting.

[*Continues to work.*

[*Enter* MATRYÓNA, *with a stick and a bundle, in outdoor clothes.*

Matryóna. May the Lord help you, honey.

Anísya (*looks round, stops working, and claps her hands with joy*). Well, I never expected this! Mother Matryóna, God has sent the right guest at the right time.

Matryóna. Well, how are things?

Anísya. Ah, I'm driven well-nigh crazy. It's awful!

Matryóna. Well, still alive, I hear?

Anísya. Oh, don't talk about it. He doesn't live and doesn't die!

Matryóna. But the money—has he given it to anybody?

Anísya. He's just sending for his sister Martha—probably about the money.

Matryóna. Well, naturally! But hasn't he given it to any one else?

Anísya. To no one. I watch like a hawk.

Matryóna. And where is it?

Anísya. He doesn't let out. And I can't find out in any way. He hides it now here, now there, and I can't do anything because of Akoulína. Idiot though she is, she keeps watch, and is always about. Oh my poor head! I'm bothered to death.

Matryóna. Oh, my jewel, if he gives the money to any one but you, you'll never cease regretting it as long as you live! They'll turn you out of house and home without anything. You've been worriting, and worriting all your life with one you don't love, and will have to go a-begging when you are a widow.

Anísya. No need to tell me, mother. My heart's that weary, and I don't know what to do. No one to get a bit of advice from. I told Nikíta, but he's frightened of the job. The only thing he did was to tell me yesterday it was hidden under the floor.

Matryóna. Well, and did you look there?

Anísya. I couldn't. The old man himself was in the room. I notice that sometimes he carries it about on him, and sometimes he hides it.

Matryóna. But you, my lass, must remember that if once he gives you the slip there's no getting it right again! (*Whispering.*) Well, and did you give him the strong tea?

Anísya. Oh! oh! . . .

[*About to answer, but sees neighbor and stops.*

[*The neighbor* (*a woman*) *passes the hut, and listens to a call from within.*

Neighbor (*to* Anísya). I say, Anísya! Oh, Anísya! There's your old man calling, I think.

Anísya. That's the way he always coughs,—just as if he were screaming. He's getting very bad.

Neighbor (*approaches* Matryóna). How do you do, granny? Have you come far?

Matryóna. Straight from home, dear. Come to see my son. Brought him some shirts—can't help thinking of these things, you see, when it's one's own child.

Neighbor. Yes, that's always so. (*To Anísya.*) And I was thinking of beginning to bleach the linen, but it is a bit early, no one has begun yet.

Anísya. Where's the hurry?

Matryóna. Well, and has he had communion?

Anísya. Oh, dear, yes, the priest was here yesterday.

Neighbor. I had a look at him yesterday. Dearie me! one wonders his body and soul keep together. And, O Lord, the other day he seemed just at his last gasp, so that

they laid him under the holy icóns.[1] They started lamenting and got ready to lay him out.

Anísya. He came to, and creeps about again.

Matryóna. Well, and is he to have extreme unction?

Anísya. The neighbors advise it. If he lives till to-morrow we'll send for the priest.

Neighbor. Oh, Anísya dear, I should think your heart must be heavy. As the saying goes, "Not he is sick that's ill in bed, but he that sits and waits in dread."

Anísya. Yes, if it were only over one way or other!

Neighbor. Yes, that's true, dying for a year, it's no joke. You're bound hand and foot like that.

Matryóna. Ah, but a widow's lot is also bitter. It's all right as long as one's young, but who'll care for you when you're old? Oh yes, old age is not pleasure. Just look at me. I've not walked very far, and yet am so footsore I don't know how to stand. Where's my son?

Anísya. Ploughing. But you come in and we'll get the samovár ready; the tea'll set you up again.

Matryóna (*sitting down*). Yes, it's true, I'm quite done up, my dears. As to extreme unction, that's absolutely necessary. Besides, they say it's good for the soul.

Anísya. Yes, we'll send to-morrow.

Matryóna. Yes, you had better. And we've had a wedding down in our parts.

Neighbor. What, in spring? [2]

Matryóna. Ah, now if it were a poor man, then, as the saying is, it's always unseasonable for a poor man to marry. But it's Simon Matvéyitch, he's married that Marína.

Anísya. What luck for her!

Neighbor. He's a widower. I suppose there are children?

Matryóna. Four of 'em. What decent girl would have him! Well, so he's taken her, and she's glad. You see, the vessel was not sound, so the wine trickled out.

[1] It is customary to place a dying person under the icón. One or more icóns hang in the hut of each Orthodox peasant.

[2] Peasant weddings are usually in autumn. They are forbidden in Lent, and soon after Easter the peasants become too busy to marry till harvest is over.

Neighbor. Oh, my! And what do people say to it? And he, a rich peasant!

Matryóna. They are living well enough so far.

Neighbor. Yes, it's true enough. Who wants to marry where there are children? There now, there's our Michael. He's such a fellow, dear me . . .

Peasant's voice. Hullo, Mávra. Where the devil are you? Go and drive the cow in.

[*Exit* NEIGHBOR.

Matryóna (*while the* NEIGHBOR *is within hearing speaks in her ordinary voice*). Yes, lass, thank goodness, she's married. At any rate my old fool won't go bothering about Nikíta. Now (*suddenly changing her tone*), she's gone! (*Whispers.*) I say, did you give him the tea?

Anísya. Don't speak about it. He'd better die of himself. It's no use—he doesn't die, and I have only taken a sin on my soul. O-oh, my head, my head! Oh, why did you give me those powders?

Matryóna. What of the powders? The sleeping powders, lass,—why not give them? No evil can come of them.

Anísya. I am not talking of the sleeping ones, but the others, the white ones.

Matryóna. Well, honey, those powders are medicinal.

Anísya (*sighs*). I know, yet it's frightening. Though he's worried me to death.

Matryóna. Well, and did you use many?

Anísya. I gave two doses.

Matryóna. Was anything noticeable?

Anísya. I had a taste of the tea myself—just a little bitter. And he drank them with the tea and says, "Even tea disgusts me," and I say, "Everything tastes bitter when one's sick." But I felt that scared, mother.

Matryóna. Don't go thinking about it. The more one thinks the worse it is.

Anísya. I wish you'd never given them to me and led me into sin. When I think of it something seems to tear my heart. Oh, dear, why did you give them to me?

Matryóna. What do you mean, honey? Lord help you! Why are you turning it on to me? Mind, lass, don't go twisting matters from the sick on to the healthy. If any-

thing were to happen, I stand aside! I know nothing! I'm aware of nothing! I'll kiss the cross on it; I never gave you any kind of powders, never saw any, never heard of any, and never knew there were such powders. You think about yourself, lass. Why, we were talking about you the other day. "Poor thing, what torture she endures. The step-daughter an idiot; the old man rotten, sucking her life-blood. What wouldn't one be ready to do in such a case!"

Anísya. I'm not going to deny it. A life such as mine could make one do worse than that. It could make you hang yourself or throttle him. Is this a life?

Matryóna. That's just it. There's no time to stand gaping; the money must be found one way or other, and then he must have his tea.

Anísya. O-oh, my head, my head! I can't think what to do. I am so frightened; he'd better die of himself. I don't want to have it on my soul.

Matryóna (*viciously*). And why doesn't he show the money? Does he mean to take it along with him? Is no one to have it? Is that right? God forbid such a sum should be lost all for nothing. Isn't that a sin? What's he doing? Is he worth considering?

Anísya. I don't know anything. He's worried me to death.

Matryóna. What is it you don't know? The business is clear. If you make a slip now, you'll repent it all your life. He'll give the money to his sister and you'll be left without.

Anísya. O-oh dear! Yes, and he did send for her—I must go.

Matryóna. You wait a bit and light the samovár first. We'll give him some tea and search him together—we'll find it, no fear.

Anísya. Oh dear, oh dear; supposing something were to happen.

Matryóna. What now? What's the good of waiting? Do you want the money to slip from your hand when it's just in sight? You go and do as I say.

Anísya. Well, I'll go and light the samovár.

Matryóna. Go, honey, do the business so as not to regret it afterwards. That's right!

[ANÍSYA *turns to go.* MATRYÓNA *calls her back.*

Matryóna. Just a word. Don't tell Nikíta about the business. He's silly. God forbid he should find out about the powders. The Lord only knows what he would do. He's so tender-hearted. D'you know, he usen't to be able to kill a chicken. Don't tell him. 'Twould be a fine go, he wouldn't understand things.

[*Stops horror-struck as* PETER *appears in the doorway.*

Peter (*holding on to the wall, creeps out into the porch and calls with a faint voice*). How's it one can't make you hear? Oh, oh, Anísya! Who's there?

[*Drops on the bench.*

Anísya (*steps from behind the corner*). Why have you come out? You should have stayed where you were lying.

Peter. Has the girl gone for Martha? It's very hard. . . . Oh, if only death would come quicker!

Anísya. She had no time. I sent her to the river. Wait a bit, I'll go myself when I'm ready.

Peter. Send Nan. Where's she? Oh, I'm that bad! Oh, death's at hand!

Anísya. I've sent for her already.

Peter. Oh, dear! Then where is she?

Anísya. Where's she got to, the plague seize her!

Peter. Oh, dear! I can't bear it. All my inside's on fire. It's as if a gimlet were boring me. Why have you left me as if I were a dog? . . . no one to give me a drink. . . . Oh . . . send Nan to me.

Anísya. Here she is. Nan, go to father.

[NAN *runs in.* ANÍSYA *goes behind the corner of the house.*

Peter. Go you. Oh . . . to Aunt Martha, tell her father wants her; say she's to come, I want her.

Nan. All right.

Peter. Wait a bit. Tell her she's to come quick. Tell her I'm dying. O-oh!

Nan. I'll just get my shawl and be off.

[*Runs off.*

Matryóna (*winking*). Now, then, mind and look sharp, lass. Go into the hut, hunt about everywhere, like a dog that's hunting for fleas: look under everything, and I'll search him.

Anísya (*to* MATRYÓNA). I feel a bit bolder, somehow, now you're here. (*Goes up to porch. To* PETER.) Hadn't I better light the samovár? Here's Mother Matryóna come to see her son; you'll have a cup of tea with her?

Peter. Well, then, light it.

[ANÍSYA *goes into the house.* MATRYÓNA *comes up to the porch.*

Peter. How do you do?

Matryóna (*bowing*). How d'you do, my benefactor; how d'you do, my precious . . . still ill, I see. And my old man, he's that sorry! "Go," says he, "see how he's getting on." He sends his respects to you.

[*Bows again.*

Peter. I'm dying.

Matryóna. Ah, yes, Peter Ignátitch, now I look at you I see, as the saying has it, "Sickness lives where men live." You've shrivelled, shrivelled, all to nothing, poor dear, now I come to look at you. Seems illness does not add to good looks.

Peter. My last hour has come.

Matryóna. Oh well, Peter Ignátitch, it's God's will you know, you've had communion, and you'll have unction, God willing. Your missus is a wise woman, the Lord be thanked; she'll give you a good burial, and have prayers said for your soul, all most respectable! And my son, he'll look after things meanwhile.

Peter. There'll be no one to manage things! She's not steady. Has her head full of folly—why, I know all about it, I know. And my girl is silly and young. I've got the homestead together, and there's no one to attend to things. One can't help feeling it.

[*Whimpers.*

Matryóna. Why, if it's money, or something, you can leave orders.

Peter (*to Anísya inside the house*). Has Nan gone?

Matryóna (*aside*). There now, he's remembered!

Anísya (*from inside*). She went then and there. Come inside, won't you? I'll help you in.

Peter. Let me sit here a bit for the last time. The air's so stuffy inside. Oh, how bad I feel! Oh, my heart's burning. . . . Oh, if death would only come!

Matryóna. If God don't take a soul, the soul can't go out. Death and life are in God's will, Peter Ignátitch. You can't be sure of death either. Maybe you'll recover yet. There was a man in our village just like that, at the very point of death . . .

Peter. No, I feel I shall die to-day, I feel it.

[*Leans back and shuts his eyes.*

Anísya (*enters*). Well, now, are you coming in or not? You do keep one waiting. Peter! eh, Peter!

Matryóna (*steps aside and beckons to* Anísya *with her finger*). Well?

Anísya (*comes down the porch steps*). Not there.

Matryóna. But have you searched everywhere? Under the floor?

Anísya. No, it's not there either. In the shed perhaps; he was rummaging there yesterday.

Matryóna. Go, search, search for all you're worth. Go all over everywhere, as if you licked with your tongue! But I see he'll die this very day, his nails are turning blue and his face looks earthy. Is the samovár ready?

Anísya. Just on the boil.

Nikíta (*comes from the other side, if possible on horseback, up to the gate, and does not see* Peter. *To* Matryóna). How d'you do, mother, is all well at home?

Matryóna. The Lord be thanked, we're all alive and have a crust to bite.

Nikíta. Well, and how's master?

Matryóna. Hush, there he sits.

[*Points to porch.*

Nikíta. Well, let him sit. What's it to me?

Peter (*opens his eyes*). Nikíta, I say, Nikíta, come here!

[Nikíta *approaches.* Anísya *and* Matryóna *whisper together.*

Peter. Why have you come back so early?

Nikíta. I've finished ploughing.

Peter. Have you done the strip beyond the bridge?

Nikíta. It's too far to go there.

Peter. Too far? From here it's still farther. You'll have to go on purpose now. You might have made one job of it.

[ANÍSYA, *without showing herself, stands and listens.*

Matryóna (*approaches*). Oh, sonny, why don't you take more pains for your master? Your master is ill and depends on you; you should serve him as you would your own father, straining every muscle just as I always tell you to.

Peter. Well, then—o-oh! . . . Get out the seed potatoes, and the women will go and sort them.

Anísya (*aside*). No fear, I'm not going. He's again sending every one away; he must have the money on him now, and wants to hide it somewhere.

Peter. Else . . . o-oh! when the time comes for planting, they'll all be rotten. Oh, I can't stand it!

[*Rises.*

Matryóna (*runs up into the porch and holds* PETER *up*). Shall I help you into the hut?

Peter. Help me in. (*Stops.*) Nikíta!

Nikíta (*angrily*). What now?

Peter. I shan't see you again . . . I'll die to-day. . . . Forgive me,[1] for Christ's sake, forgive me if I have ever sinned against you. . . . If I have sinned in word or deed. . . . There's been all sorts of things. Forgive me!

Nikíta. What's there to forgive? I'm a sinner myself.

Matryóna. Ah, sonny, have some feeling.

Peter. Forgive me, for Christ's sake.

[*Weeps.*

Nikíta (*snivels*). God will forgive you, Daddy Peter. I have no cause to complain of you. You've never done

[1] A formal request for forgiveness is customary among Russians, but it is often no mere formality. Nikíta's first reply is evasive; his second reply, "God will forgive you," is the correct one sanctioned by custom.

me any wrong. You forgive me; maybe I've sinned worse against you. (*Weeps.*)

[PETER *goes in whimpering,* MATRYÓNA *supporting him.*

Anísya. Oh, my poor head! It's not without some reason he's hit on that. (*Approaches* NIKÍTA.) Why did you say the money was under the floor? It's not there.

Nikíta (*does not answer, but cries*). I have never had anything bad from him, nothing but good, and what have I gone and done!

Anísya. Enough now! Where's the money?

Nikíta (*angrily*). How should I know? Go and look for it yourself!

Anísya. What's made you so tender?

Nikíta. I am sorry for him,—that sorry. How he cried! Oh, dear!

Anísya. Look at him,—seized with pity! He has found some one to pity too! He's been treating you like a dog, and even just now was giving orders to have you turned out of the house. You'd better show me some pity!

Nikíta. What are you to be pitied for?

Anísya. If he dies, and the money's been hidden away . . .

Nikíta. No fear, he'll not hide it . . .

Anísya. Oh, Nikíta darling! he's sent for his sister, and wants to give it to her. It will be a bad lookout for us. How are we going to live, if he gives her the money? They'll turn me out of the house! You try and manage somehow! You said he went to the shed last night.

Nikíta. I saw him coming from there, but where he's shoved it to, who can tell?

Anísya. Oh, my poor head! I'll go and have a look there.

[NIKÍTA *steps aside.*]

Matryóna (*comes out of the hut and down the steps of the porch to* ANÍSYA *and* NIKÍTA). Don't go anywhere. He's got the money on him. I felt it on a string round his neck.

Anísya. Oh my head, my head!

Matryóna. If you don't keep wide awake now, then you may whistle for it. If his sister comes—then good-bye to it!

Anísya. That's true. She'll come and he'll give it her. What's to be done? Oh, my poor head!

Matryóna. What is to be done? Why, look here: the samovár is boiling, go and make the tea and pour him out a cup, and then (*whispers*) put in all that's left in the paper. When he's drunk the cup, then just take it. He'll not tell, no fear.

Anísya. Oh! I'm afeared!

Matryóna. Don't be talking now, but look alive, and I'll keep his sister off if need be. Mind, don't make a blunder! Get hold of the money and bring it here, and Nikíta will hide it.

Anísya. Oh my head, my head! I don't know how I'm going to . . .

Matryóna. Don't talk about it I tell you, do as I bid you. Nikíta!

Nikíta. What is it?

Matryóna. You stay here—sit down—in case something is wanted.

Nikíta (*waves his hand*). Oh, these women, what won't they be up to? Muddle one up completely. Bother them! I'll really go and fetch out the potatoes.

Matryóna (*catches him by the arm*). Stay here, I tell you.

[NAN *enters.*

Anísya. Well?

Nan. She was down in her daughter's vegetable plot—she's coming.

Anísya. Coming! What shall we do?

Matryóna. There's plenty of time if you do as I tell you.

Anísya. I don't know what to do; I know nothing, my brain's all in a whirl. Nan! Go, daughter, and see to the calves, they'll have run away, I'm afraid. . . . Oh dear, I haven't the courage.

Matryóna. Go on! I should think the samovár's boiling over.

Anísya. Oh my head, my poor head! [*Exit.*]

Matryóna (*approaches* NIKÍTA). Now then, sonny. (*Sits down beside him.*) Your affairs must also be thought about, and not left anyhow.

Nikíta. What affairs?

Matryóna. Why, this affair—how you're to live your life.

Nikíta. How to live my life? Others live, and I shall live!

Matryóna. The old man will probably die to-day.

Nikíta. Well, if he dies, God give him rest! What's that to me?

Matryóna (*keeps looking towards the porch while she speaks*). Eh, sonny! Those that are alive have to think about living. One needs plenty of sense in these matters, honey. What do you think? I've tramped all over the place after your affairs, I've got quite footsore bothering about matters. And you must not forget me when the time comes.

Nikíta. And what's it you've been bothering about?

Matryóna. About your affairs, about your future. If you don't take trouble in good time you'll get nothing. You know Iván Moséitch? Well, I've been to him too. I went there the other day. I had something else to settle, you know. Well, so I sat and chatted awhile and then came to the point. "Tell me, Iván Moséitch," says I, "how's one to manage an affair of this kind? Supposing," says I, "a peasant as is a widower married a second wife, and supposing all the children he has is a daughter by the first wife, and a daughter by the second. Then," says I, "when that peasant dies, could an outsider get hold of the homestead by marrying the widow? Could he," says I, "give both the daughters in marriage and remain master of the house himself?" "Yes, he could," says he, "but," says he, "it would mean a deal of trouble; still the thing could be managed by means of money, but if there's no money it's no good trying."

Nikíta (*laughs*). That goes without saying, only fork out the money. Who does not want money?

Matryóna. Well then, honey, so I spoke out plainly

about the affair. And he says, "First and foremost, your son will have to get himself on the register of that village —that will cost something. The elders will have to be treated. And they, you see, they'll sign. Everything," says he, "must be done sensibly." Look (*unwraps her kerchief and takes out a paper*), he's written out this paper; just read it, you're a scholar, you know.

[NIKÍTA *reads.*

Nikíta. This paper's only a decision for the elders to sign. There's no great wisdom needed for that.

Matryóna. But you just hear what Iván Mosévitch bids us do. "Above all," he says, "mind and don't let the money slip away, dame. If she don't get hold of the money," he says, "they'll not let her do it. Money's the great thing!" So look out, sonny, things are coming to a head.

Nikíta. What's that to me? The money's hers—so let her look out.

Matryóna. Ah, sonny, how you look at it! How can a woman manage such affairs? Even if she does get the money, is she capable of arranging it all? One knows what a woman is! You're a man anyhow. You can hide it, and all that. You see, you've after all got more sense, in case of anything happening.

Nikíta. Oh, your woman's notions are all so inexpedient!

Matryóna. Why inexpedient? You just collar the money, and the woman's in your hands. And then should she ever turn snappish you'd be able to tighten the reins!

Nikíta. Bother you all,—I'm going.

Anísya (*quite pale, runs out of the hut and round the corner to* MATRYÓNA). So it was, it was on him! Here it is!

[*Shows that she has something under her apron.*

Matryóna. Give it to Nikíta; he'll hide it. Nikíta, take it and hide it somewhere.

Nikíta. All right, give here!

Anísya. O-oh, my poor head! No, I'd better do it myself.

[*Goes towards the gate.*

Matryóna (*seizing her by the arm*). Where are you going to? You'll be missed. There's the sister coming; give it him; he knows what to do. Eh, you blockhead!

Anísya (*stops irresolutely*). Oh, my head, my head!

Nikíta. Well, give it here. I'll shove it away somewhere.

Anísya. Where will you shove it to?

Nikíta (*laughing*). Why, are you afraid?

[*Enter* Akoulína, *carrying clothes from the wash.*

Anísya. O-oh, my poor head! (*Gives the money.*) Mind, Nikíta.

Nikíta. What are you afraid of? I'll hide it so that I'll not be able to find it myself.

[*Exit.*

Anísya (*stands in terror*). Oh dear, and supposing he . . .

Matryóna. Well, is he dead?

Anísya. Yes, he seems dead. He did not move when I took it.

Matryóna. Go in, there's Akoulína.

Anísya. Well there, I've done the sin and he has the money. . . .

Matryóna. Have done and go in! There's Martha coming!

Anísya. There now, I've trusted him. What's going to happen now?

[*Exit.*

Martha (*enters from one side,* Akoulína *enters from the other. To* Akoulína). I should have come before, but I was at my daughter's. Well, how's the old man? Is he dying?

Akoulína (*puts down the clothes*). Don't know; I've been to the river.

Martha (*pointing to* Matryóna). Who's that?

Matryóna. I'm from Zoúevo. I'm Nikíta's mother from Zoúevo, my dearie. Good afternoon to you. He's withering, withering away, poor dear—your brother, I mean. He came out himself. "Send for my sister," he said, "because," said he . . . Dear me, why, I do believe he's dead!

Anísya (*runs out screaming. Clings to a post, and begins*

wailing).[1] Oh, oh, ah! who-o-o-o-m have you left me to, why-y-y have you dese-e-e-e-rted me—a miserable widow . . . to live my life alone . . . Why have you closed your bright eyes . . .

[*Enter* NEIGHBOR. MATRYÓNA *and* NEIGHBOR *catch hold of* ANÍSYA *under the arms to support her.* AKOULÍNA *and* MARTHA *go into the hut. A crowd assembles.*

A voice in the crowd. Send for the old women to lay out the body.

Matryóna (*rolls up her sleeves*). Is there any water in the copper? But I daresay the samovár is still hot. I'll also go and help a bit.

CURTAIN

[1] Loud public wailing of this kind is customary, and considered indispensable, among the peasants.

ACT III

The same hut. Winter. Nine months have passed since Act II. ANÍSYA, *plainly dressed, sits before a loom weaving.* NAN *is on the oven.*

Mítritch (*an old laborer, enters and slowly takes off his outdoor things*). Oh Lord, have mercy! Well, hasn't the master come home yet?

Anísya. What?

Mítritch. Nikíta isn't back from town, is he?

Anísya. No.

Mítritch. Must have been on the spree. Oh Lord!

Anísya. Have you finished in the stackyard?

Mítritch. What d'you think? Got it all as it should be, and covered everything with straw! I don't like doing things by halves! Oh Lord! holy Nicholas! (*Picks at the corns on his hands.*) But it's time he was back.

Anísya. What need has he to hurry? He's got money. Merry-making with that girl, I daresay. . . .

Mítritch. Why shouldn't one make merry if one has the money? And why did Akoulína go to town?

Anísya. You'd better ask her. How do I know what the devil took her there!

Mítritch. What! to town? There's all sorts of things to be got in town if one's got the means. Oh Lord!

Nan. Mother, I heard myself. "I'll get you a little shawl," he says, blest if he didn't; "you shall choose it yourself," he says. And she got herself up so fine; she put on her velveteen coat and the French shawl.

Anísya. Really, a girl's modesty reaches only to the door. Step over the threshold and it's forgotten. She is a shameless creature.

Mítritch. Oh my! What's the use of being ashamed? While there's plenty of money make merry. Oh Lord!

It is too soon to have supper, eh? (ANÍSYA *does not answer.*) I'll go and get warm meanwhile. (*Climbs on the stove.*) Oh, Lord! Blessed Virgin Mother! Holy Nicholas!

Neighbor (*enters*). Seems your goodman's not back yet?

Anísya. No.

Neighbor. It's time he was. Hasn't he perhaps stopped at our inn? My sister, Thekla, says there's heaps of sledges standing there as have come from the town.

Anísya. Nan! Nan, I say!

Nan. Yes?

Anísya. You run to the inn and see! Mayhap, being drunk, he's gone there.

Nan (*jumps down from the oven and dresses*). All right.

Neighbor. And he's taken Akoulína with him?

Anísya. Else he'd not have had any need of going. It's because of her he's unearthed all the business there. "Must go to the bank," he says; "it's time to receive the payments," he says. But it's all her fooling.

Neighbor (*shakes her head*). It's a bad look-out.

[*Silence.*

Nan (*at the door*). And if he's there, what am I to say?

Anísya. You only see if he's there.

Nan. All right. I'll be back in a winking.

[*Long silence.*

Mítritch (*roars*). Oh Lord! merciful Nicholas!

Neighbor (*starting*). Oh, how he scared me! Who is it?

Anísya. Why, Mítritch, our laborer.

Neighbor. Oh dear, oh dear, what a fright he did give me! I had quite forgotten. But tell me, dear, I've heard some one's been wooing Akoulína?

Anísya (*gets up from the loom and sits down by the table*). There was some one from Dédlovo; but it seems the affair's got wind there too. They made a start, and then stopped; so the thing fell through. Of course, who'd care to?

Neighbor. And the Lizounófs from Zoúevo?

Anisya. They made some steps too, but it didn't come off either. They won't even see us.

Neighbor. Yet it's time she was married.

Anisya. Time and more than time! Ah, my dear, I'm that impatient to get her out of the house; but the matter does not come off. He does not wish it, nor she either. He's not yet had enough of his beauty, you see.

Neighbor. Eh, eh, eh, what doings! Only think of it. Why, he's her step-father!

Anisya. Ah, friend, they've taken me in completely. They've done me so fine it's beyond saying. I, fool that I was, noticed nothing, suspected nothing, and so I married him. I guessed nothing, but they already understood one another.

Neighbor. Oh dear, what goings on!

Anisya. So it went on from bad to worse, and I see they begin hiding from me. Ah, friend, I was that sick—that sick of my life! It's not as if I didn't love him.

Neighbor. That goes without saying.

Anisya. Ah, how hard it is to bear such treatment from him! Oh, how it hurts!

Neighbor. Yes, and I've heard say he's becoming too free with his fists?

Anisya. And that too! There was a time when he was gentle when he'd had a drop. He used to hit out before, but of me he was always fond! But now when he's in a temper he goes for me and is ready to trample me under his feet. The other day he got both my hands entangled in my hair so that I could hardly get away. And the girl's worse than a serpent; it's a wonder the earth bears such furies.

Neighbor. Ah, ah, my dear, now I look at you, you are a sufferer! To suffer like that is no joke. To have given shelter to a beggar, and he to lead you such a dance! Why don't you pull in the reins?

Anisya. Ah, but, my dear, if it weren't for my heart! Him as is gone was stern enough, still I could twist him about any way I liked; but with this one I can do nothing. As soon as I see him all my anger goes. I haven't a grain of courage before him; I go about like a drowned hen.

Neighbor. Ah, neighbor, you must be under a spell. I've heard that Matryóna goes in for that sort of thing. It must be her.

Anísya. Yes, dear; I think so myself sometimes. Gracious me, how hurt I feel at times! I'd like to tear him to pieces. But when I set eyes on him, my heart won't go against him.

Neighbor. It's plain you're bewitched. It don't take long to blight a body. There now, when I look at you, what you have dwindled to!

Anísya. Growing a regular spindle-shanks. And just look at that fool Akoulína. Wasn't the girl a regular untidy slattern, and just look at her now! Where has it all come from? Yes, he has fitted her out. She's grown so smart, so puffed up, just like a bubble that's ready to burst. And, though she's a fool, she's got it into her head. "I'm the mistress," she says; "the house is mine; it's me father wanted him to marry." And she's that vicious! Lord help us, when she gets into a rage she's ready to tear the thatch off the house.

Neighbor. Oh dear, what a life yours is, now I come to look at you. And yet there's people envying you: "They're rich," they say; but it seems that gold don't keep tears from falling.

Anísya. Much reason for envy indeed! And the riches, too, will soon be made ducks and drakes of. Dear me, how he squanders money!

Neighbor. But how's it, dear, you've been so simple to give up the money? It's yours.

Anísya. Ah, if you knew all! The thing is that I've made one little mistake.

Neighbor. Well, if I were you, I'd go straight and have the law of him. The money's yours; how dare he squander it? There's no such rights.

Anísya. They don't pay heed to that nowadays.

Neighbor. Ah, my dear, now I come to look at you, you've got that weak.

Anísya. Yes, quite weak, dear, quite weak. He's got me into a regular fix. I don't myself know anything. Oh, my poor head!

Neighbor (*listening*). There's some one coming, I think.

[*The door opens and* Akím *enters.*

Akim (*crosses himself, knocks the snow off his feet, and takes off his coat*). Peace be to this house! How do you do? Are you well, daughter?

Anisya. How d'you do, father? Do you come straight from home?

Akim. I've been a-thinking I'll go and see what's name, go to see my son, I mean,—my son. I didn't start early—had my dinner, I mean; I went, and it's so what d'you call it—so snowy, hard walking, and so there I'm what d'you call it—late, I mean. And my son—is he at home? At home? My son, I mean.

Anisya. No; he's gone to the town.

Akim (*sits down on a bench*). I've some business with him, d'you see, some business, I mean. I told him t'other day, told him I was in need—told him, I mean, that our horse was done for, our horse, you see. So we must what d'ye call it, get a horse, I mean, some kind of a horse, I mean. So there, I've come, you see.

Anisya. Nikíta told me. When he comes back you'll have a talk. (*Goes to the oven.*) Have some supper now, and he'll soon come. Mítritch, eh, Mítritch, come have your supper.

Mítritch. Oh Lord! merciful Nicholas!

Anisya. Come to supper.

Neighbor. I shall go now. Good-night.

[*Exit.*

Mítritch (*gets down from the oven*). I never noticed how I fell asleep. Oh, Lord! gracious Nicholas! How d'you do, Daddy Akím?

Akim. Ah, Mítritch! What are you, what d'ye call it, I mean? . . .

Mítritch. Why, I'm working for your son, Nikíta.

Akim. Dear me! What d'ye call . . . working for my son, I mean. Dear me!

Mítritch. I was living with a tradesman in town, but drank all I had there. Now I've come back to the village.

I've no home, so I've gone into service. (*Gapes.*) Oh Lord!

Akim. But how's that, what d'you call it, or what's name, Nikíta, what does he do? Has he some business, I mean besides, that he should hire a laborer, a laborer, I mean, hire a laborer?

Anísya. What business should he have? He used to manage, but now he's other things on his mind, so he's hired a laborer.

Mítritch. Why shouldn't he, seeing he has money?

Akim. Now that's what d'you call it, that's wrong, I mean, quite wrong, I mean. That's spoiling oneself.

Anísya. Oh, he has got spoilt, that spoilt, it's just awful.

Akim. There now, what d'you call it, one thinks how to make things better, and it gets worse I mean. Riches spoil a man, spoil, I mean.

Mítritch. Fatness makes even a dog go mad; how's one not to get spoilt by fat living? Myself now; how I went on with fat living. I drank for three weeks without being sober. I drank my last breeches. When I had nothing left, I gave it up. Now I've determined not to. Bother it!

Akim. And where's what d'you call, your old woman?

Mítritch. My old woman has found her right place, old fellow. She's hanging about the gin-shops in town. She's a swell too; one eye knocked out, and the other black, and her muzzle twisted to one side. And she's never sober; drat her!

Akim. Oh, oh, oh, how's that?

Mítritch. And where's a soldier's wife to go? She has found her right place.

[*Silence.*

Akim (*to* Anísya). And Nikíta,—has he what d'you call it, taken anything up to town? I mean, anything to sell?

Anísya (*laying the table and serving up*). No, he's taken nothing. He's gone to get money from the bank.

Akim (*sitting down to supper*). Why? D'you wish to put it to another use, the money I mean?

Anisya. No, we don't touch it. Only some twenty or thirty roubles as have come due; they must be taken.

Akim. Must be taken. Why take it, the money I mean? You'll take some to-day I mean, and some to-morrow; and so you'll what d'you call it, take it all, I mean.

Anisya. We get this besides. The money is all safe.

Akim. All safe? How's that, safe? You take it, and it what d'you call it, it's all safe. How's that? You put a heap of meal into a bin, or a barn, I mean, and go on taking meal, will it remain there, what d'you call it, all safe, I mean? That's, what d'you call it, it's cheating. You'd better find out, or else they'll cheat you. Safe indeed! I mean you what d'ye call . . . you take it and it remains all safe there?

Anisya. I know nothing about it. Iván Moséitch advised us at the time. "Put the money in the bank," he said, "the money will be safe, and you'll get interest," he said.

Mitritch (*having finished his supper*). That's so. I've lived with a tradesman. They all do like that. Put the money in the bank, then lie down on the oven and it will keep coming in.

Akim. That's queer talk. How's that—what d'ye call, coming in, how's that coming in, and they, who do they get it from I mean, the money I mean?

Anisya. They take the money out of the bank.

Mitritch. Get along! 'Tain't a thing a woman can understand! You look here, I'll make it all clear to you. Mind and remember. You see, suppose you've got some money, and I, for instance, have spring coming on, my land's idle, I've got no seeds, or I have to pay taxes. So, you see, I go to you. "Akím," I say, "give us a ten-rouble note, and when I've harvested in autumn I'll return it, and till two acres for you besides, for having obliged me!" And you, seeing I've something to fall back on—a horse say, or a cow—you say, "No, give two or three roubles for the obligation," and there's an end of it. I'm stuck in the mud, and can't do without. So I say, "All right!" and take a tenner. In the autumn, when I've made my turnover, I

bring it back, and you squeeze the extra three roubles out of me.

Akim. Yes, but that's what peasants do when they what d'ye call it, when they forget God. It's not honest, I mean, it's no good, I mean.

Mitritch. You wait. You'll see it comes just to the same thing. Now don't forget how you've skinned me. And Anísya, say, has got some money lying idle. She does not know what to do with it, besides, she's a woman, and does not know how to use it. She comes to you. "Couldn't you make some profit with my money too?" she says. "Why not?" say you, and you wait. Before the summer I come again and say, "Give me another tenner, and I'll be obliged." Then you find out if my hide isn't all gone, and if I can be skinned again you give me Anísya's money. But supposing I'm clean shorn,—have nothing to eat,—then you see I can't be fleeced any more, and you say, "Go your way, friend," and you look out for another, and lend him your own and Anísya's money and skin him. That's what the bank is. So it goes round and round. It's a cute thing, old fellow!

Akim (*excitedly*). Gracious me, whatever is that like? It's what d'ye call it, it's filthy! The peasants—what d'ye call it, the peasants do so I mean, and know it's, what d'ye call it, a sin! It's what d'you call, not right, not right, I mean. It's filthy! How can people as have learnt . . . what d'ye call it . . .

Mitritch. That, old fellow, is just what they're fond of! And remember, them that are stupid, or the women folk, as can't put their money into use themselves, they take it to the bank, and they there, deuce take 'em, clutch hold of it, and with this money they fleece the people. It's a cute thing!

Akim (*sighing*). Oh dear, I see, what d'ye call it, without money it's bad, and with money it's worse! How's that? God told us to work, but you, what d'you call . . . I mean you put money into the bank and go to sleep, and the money will what d'ye call it, will feed you while you sleep. It's filthy, that's what I call it; it's not right.

Mitritch. Not right? Eh, old fellow, who cares about

that nowadays? And how clean they pluck you, too! That's the fact of the matter.

Akím (*sighs*). Ah, yes, seems the time's what d'ye call it, the time's growing ripe. There, I've had a look at the closets in town. What they've come to! It's all polished and polished I mean, it's fine, it's what d'ye call it, it's like inside an inn. And what's it all for? What's the good of it? Oh, they've forgotten God. Forgotten, I mean. We've forgotten, forgotten God, God, I mean! Thank you, my dear, I've had enough. I'm quite satisfied.

[*Rises.* Mítritch *climbs on to the oven.*

Anísya (*eats, and collects the dishes*). If his father would only take him to task! But I'm ashamed to tell him.

Akím. What d'you say?

Anísya. Oh! it's nothing.

[*Enter* Nan.

Akím. Here's a good girl, always busy! You're cold, I should think?

Nan. Yes, I am, terribly. How d'you do, grandfather?

Anísya. Well? Is he there?

Nan. No. But Andriyán is there. He's been to town, and he says he saw them at an inn in town. He says Dad's as drunk as drunk can be!

Anísya. Do you want anything to eat? Here you are.

Nan (*goes to the oven*). Well, it *is* cold. My hands are quite numb.

[Akím *takes off his leg-bands and bast-shoes.* Anísya *washes up.*

Anísya. Father!

Akím. Well, what is it?

Anísya. And is Marína living well?

Akím. Yes, she's living all right. The little woman is what d'ye call it, clever and steady; she's living, and what d'ye call it, doing her best. She's all right; the little woman's of the right sort I mean; painstaking and what d'ye call it, submissive; the little woman's all right I mean, all right, you know.

Anísya. And is there no talk in your village that a relative of Marína's husband thinks of marrying our Akoulína? Have you heard nothing of it?

Akim. Ah; that's Mirónof. Yes, the women did chatter something. But I didn't pay heed, you know. It don't interest me I mean, I don't know anything. Yes, the old women did say something, but I've a bad memory, bad memory, I mean. But the Mirónofs are what d'ye call it, they're all right, I mean they're all right.

Anísya. I'm that impatient to get her settled.

Akim. And why?

Nan (*listens*). They've come!

Anísya. Well, don't you go bothering them.

[*Goes on washing the spoons without turning her head.*

Nikíta (*enters*). Anísya! Wife! who has come?

[Anísya *looks up and turns away in silence.*

Nikíta (*severely*). Who has come? Have you forgotten?

Anísya. Now don't humbug. Come in!

Nikíta (*still more severely*). Who's come?

Anísya (*goes up and takes him by the arm*). Well, then, husband has come. Now then, come in!

Nikíta (*holds back*). Ah, that's it! Husband! And what's husband called? Speak properly.

Anísya. Oh bother you! Nikíta!

Nikíta. Where have you learnt manners? The full name.

Anísya. Nikíta Akímitch! Now then!

Nikíta (*still in the doorway*). Ah, that's it! But now—the surname?

Anísya (*laughs and pulls him by the arm*). Tchilíkin. Dear me, what airs!

Nikíta. Ah, that's it. (*Holds on to the door-post.*) No, now say with which foot Tchilíkin steps into this house!

Anísya. That's enough! You're letting the cold in!

Nikíta. Say with which foot he steps? You've got to say it,—that's flat.

Anísya (*aside*). He'll go on worrying. (*To* Nikíta.) Well then, with the left. Come in!

Nikíta. Ah, that's it.

Anísya. You look who's in the hut!

Nikíta. Ah, my parent! Well, what of that? I'm not ashamed of my parent. I can pay my respects to my parent. How d'you do, father? (*Bows and puts out his hand.*) My respects to you.

Akím (*does not answer*). Drink, I mean drink, what it does! It's filthy!

Nikíta. Drink, what's that? I've been drinking? I'm to blame, that's flat! I've had a glass with a friend, drank his health.

Anísya. Go and lie down, I say.

Nikíta. Wife, say where am I standing?

Anísya. Now then, it's all right, lie down!

Nikíta. No, I'll first drink a samovár with my parent. Go and light the samovár. Akoulína, I say, come here!

[*Enter* AKOULÍNA, *smartly dressed and carrying their purchases.*

Akoulína. Why have you thrown everything about? Where's the yarn?

Nikíta. The yarn? The yarn's there. Hullo, Mítritch, where are you? Asleep? Asleep? Go and put the horse up.

Akím (*not seeing* AKOULÍNA *but looking at his son*). Dear me, what is he doing? The old man's what d'ye call it, quite done up, I mean,—been thrashing,—and look at him, what d'ye call it, putting on airs! Put up the horse! Faugh, what filth!

Mítritch (*climbs down from the oven, and puts on felt boots*). Oh, merciful Lord! Is the horse in the yard? Done it to death, I dare say. Just see how he's been swilling, the deuce take him. Up to his very throat. Oh Lord, Holy Nicholas!

[*Puts on sheepskin and exit.*

Nikíta (*sits down*). You must forgive me, father. It's true I've had a drop; well, what of that? Even a hen will drink. Ain't it true? So you must forgive me. Never mind Mítritch, he doesn't mind, he'll put it up.

Anísya. Shall I really light the samovár?

Nikíta. Light it! My parent has come. I wish to talk to him, and shall drink tea with him. (*To* AKOULÍNA.) Have you brought all the parcels?

Akoulína. The parcels? I've brought mine, the rest's in the sledge. Hi, take this, this isn't mine!

[*Throws a parcel on the table and puts the others into her box.* NAN *watches her while she puts them away.* AKÍM *does not look at his son, but puts his leg-bands and bast-shoes on the oven.*

Anísya (*going out with the samovár*). Her box is full as it is, and still he's bought more!

Nikíta (*pretending to be sober*). You must not be cross with me, father. You think I'm drunk? I am all there, that's flat! As they say, "Drink, but keep your wits about you." I can talk with you at once, father. I can attend to any business. You told me about the money; your horse is worn-out,—I remember! That can all be managed. That's all in our hands. If it was an enormous sum that's wanted, then we might wait; but as it is I can do everything. That's the case.

Akím (*goes on fidgeting with the leg-bands*). Eh, lad, "It's ill sledging when the thaw has set in."

Nikíta. What do you mean by that? "And it's ill talking with one who is drunk?" But don't you worry, let's have some tea. And I can do anything; that's flat! I can put everything to rights.

Akím (*shakes his head*). Eh, eh, eh!

Nikíta The money, here it is. (*Puts his hand in his pocket, pulls out pocket-book, handles the notes in it and takes out a ten-rouble note.*) Take this to get a horse; I can't forget my parent. I shan't forsake him, that's flat. Because he's my parent! Here you are, take it! Really now, I don't grudge it. (*Comes up and pushes the note towards* AKÍM, *who won't take it.* NIKÍTA *catches hold of his father's hand.*) Take it, I tell you. I don't grudge it.

Akím. I can't what d'you call it, I mean, can't take it! And can't what d'ye call it, talk to you, because you're not yourself, I mean.

Nikíta. I'll not let you go! Take it!

[*Puts the money into* AKÍM's *hand.*

Anísya (*enters, and stops*). You'd better take it, he'll give you no peace!

Akím (*takes it, and shakes his head*). Oh! that liquor. Not like a man, I mean!

Nikíta. That's better! If you repay it you'll repay it, if not I'll make no bother. That's what I am! (*Sees* Akoulína.) Akoulína, show your presents.

Akoulína. What?

Nikíta. Show your presents.

Akoulína. The presents, what's the use of showing 'em? I've put 'em away.

Nikíta. Get them, I tell you. Nan will like to see 'em. Undo the shawl. Give it here.

Akím. Oh, oh! It's sickening!

[*Climbs on the oven.*

Akoulína (*gets out the parcels and puts them on the table*). Well, there you are,—what's the good of looking at 'em?

Nan. Oh how lovely! It's as good as Stepanída's.

Akoulína. Stepanída's? What's Stepanída's compared to this? (*Brightening up and undoing the parcels.*) Just look here,—see the quality! It's a French one.

Nan. The print *is* fine! Mary has a dress like it, only lighter on a blue ground. This *is* pretty.

Nikíta. Ah, that's it!

[Anísya *passes angrily into the closet, returns with a tablecloth and the chimney of the samovár, and goes up to the table.*

Anísya. Drat you, littering the table!

Nikíta. You look here!

Anísya. What am I to look at? Have I never seen anything? Put it away!

[*Sweeps the shawl on to the floor with her arm.*

Akoulína. What are you pitching things down for? You pitch your own things about!

[*Picks up the shawl.*

Nikíta. Anísya! Look here!

Anísya. Why am I to look?

Nikíta. You think I have forgotten you? Look here! (*Shows her a parcel and sits down on it.*) It's a present for you. Only you must earn it! Wife, where am I sitting?

Anísya. Enough of your humbug. I'm not afraid of you. Whose money are you spreeing on and buying your fat wench presents with? Mine!

Akoulína. Yours indeed? No fear! You wished to steal it, but it did not come off! Get out of the way!

[*Pushes her while trying to pass.*

Anísya. What are you shoving for? I'll teach you to shove!

Akoulína. Shove me? You try!

[*Presses against* ANÍSYA.

Nikíta. Now then, now then, you women. Have done now!

[*Steps between them.*

Akoulína. Comes shoving herself in! You ought to keep quiet and remember your doings! You think no one knows!

Anísya. Knows what? Out with it, out with it! What do they know?

Akoulína. I know something about you!

Anísya. You're a slut who goes with another's husband!

Akoulína. And you did yours to death!

Anísya (*throwing herself on* AKOULÍNA). You're raving!

Nikíta (*holding her back*). Anísya, you seem to have forgotten!

Anísya. Want to frighten me! I'm not afraid of you!

Nikíta (*turns* ANÍSYA *round and pushes her out*). Be off!

Anísya. Where am I to go? I'll not go out of my own house!

Nikíta. Be off, I tell you, and don't dare to come in here!

Anísya. I won't go! (NIKÍTA *pushes her,* ANÍSYA *cries and screams and clings to the door.*) What! am I to be turned out of my own house by the scruff of the neck? What are you doing, you scoundrel? Do you think there's no law for you? You wait a bit!

Nikíta. Now then!

Anísya. I'll go to the Elder! To the policeman!

Nikíta. Off, I tell you!

[*Pushes her out.*

Anisya (*behind the door*). I'll hang myself!

Nikita. No fear!

Nan. Oh, oh, oh! Mother, dear, darling!

[*Cries.*]

Nikita. Me frightened of her! A likely thing! What are you crying for? She'll come back, no fear. Go and see to the samovár.

[*Exit* NAN.

Akoulina (*collects and folds her presents*). The mean wretch, how she's messed it up. But wait a bit, I'll cut up her jacket for her! Sure I will!

Nikita. I've turned her out; what more do you want?

Akoulina. She's dirtied my new shawl. If that bitch hadn't gone away, I'd have torn her eyes out!

Nikita. That's enough. Why should you be angry? Now if I loved her . . .

Akoulina. Loved her? She's worth loving, with her fat mug! If you'd have given her up, then nothing would have happened. You should have sent her to the devil. And the house was mine all the same, and the money was mine! Says she is the mistress, but what sort of mistress is she to her husband? She's a murderess, that's what she is! She'll serve you the same way!

Nikita. Oh dear, how's one to stop a woman's jaw? You don't yourself know what you're jabbering about!

Akoulina. Yes, I do. I'll not live with her! I'll turn her out of the house! She can't live here with me. The mistress indeed! She's not the mistress,—that jailbird!

Nikita. That's enough! What have you to do with her? Don't mind her. You look at me! I am the master! I do as I like. I've ceased to love her, and now I love you. I love who I like! The power is mine, she's under me. That's where I keep her. (*Points to his feet.*) A pity we've no concertina.

[*Sings.*

"We have loaves on the stoves,
We have porridge on the shelf.
So we'll live and be gay,
Making merry every day,

And when death comes,
Then we'll die!
We have loaves on the stoves,
We have porridge on the shelf . . ."

[*Enter* MÍTRITCH. *He takes off his outdoor things and climbs on the oven.*

Mítritch. Seems the women have been fighting again! Tearing each other's hair. Oh Lord, gracious Nicholas!

Akím (*sitting on the edge of the oven, takes his leg-bands and shoes and begins putting them on*). Get in, get into the corner.

Mítritch. Seems they can't settle matters between them. Oh Lord!

Nikíta. Get out the liquor, we'll have some with our tea.

Nan (*to* AKOULÍNA). Sister, the samovár is just boiling over.

Nikíta. And where's your mother?

Nan. She's standing and crying out there in the passage.

Nikíta. Oh, that's it! Call her, and tell her to bring the samovár. And you, Akoulína, get the tea things.

Akoulína. The tea things? All right.

[*Brings the things.*

Nikíta (*unpacks spirits, rusks, and salt herrings*). That's for myself. This is yarn for the wife. The paraffin is out there in the passage, and here's the money. Wait a bit (*takes a counting-frame*); I'll add it up. (*Adds.*) Wheat-flour, 80 kopéykas, oil . . . Father, 10 roubles. . . . Father, come let's have some tea!

[*Silence.* AKÍM *sits on the oven and winds the bands round his legs. Enter* ANÍSYA *with samovár.*

Anísya. Where shall I put it?

Nikíta. Here on the table. Well! have you been to the Elder? Ah, that's it! Have your say and then eat your words. Now then, that's enough. Don't be cross; sit down and drink this. (*Fills a wine-glass for her.*) And here's your present.

[*Gives her the parcel he had been sitting on.* ANÍSYA *takes it silently and shakes her head.*

Akim (*gets down and puts on his sheepskin, then comes up to the table and puts down the money*). Here, take your money back! Put it away.

Nikíta (*does not see the money*). Why have you put on your things?

Akim. I'm going, going, I mean; forgive me, for the Lord's sake.

[*Takes up his cap and belt.*

Nikíta. My gracious! Where are you going to at this time of night?

Akim. I can't, I mean what d'ye call 'em, in your house, what d'ye call 'em, can't stay I mean, stay, can't stay, forgive me.

Nikíta. But are you going without having any tea?

Akim (*fastens his belt*). Going because, I mean, it's not right in your house, I mean, what d'you call it, not right, Nikíta, in the house, what d'ye call it, not right! I mean, you are living a bad life, Nikíta, bad,—I'll go.

Nikíta. Eh, now! Have done talking! Sit down and drink your tea!

Anísya. Why, father, you'll shame us before the neighbors. What has offended you?

Akim. Nothing what d'ye call it, nothing has offended me, nothing at all! I mean only, I see, what d'you call it, I mean, I see my son, to ruin, I mean, to ruin, I mean my son's on the road to ruin, I mean.

Nikíta. What ruin? Just prove it!

Akim. Ruin, ruin; you're in the midst of it! What did I tell you that time?

Nikíta. You said all sorts of things!

Akim. I told you, what d'ye call it, I told you about the orphan lass. That you had wronged an orphan—Marína, I mean, wronged her!

Nikíta. Eh! he's at it again. Let bygones be bygones . . . All that's past!

Akim (*excited*). Past! No, lad, it's not past. Sin, I mean, fastens on to sin—drags sin after it, and you've stuck fast, Nikíta, fast in sin! Stuck fast in sin! I see you're fast in sin. Stuck fast, sunk in sin, I mean!

Nikíta. Sit down and drink your tea, and have done with it!

Akím. I can't, I mean can't what d'ye call it, can't drink tea. Because of your filth, I mean; I feel what d'ye call it, I feel sick, very sick! I can't what d'ye call it, I can't drink tea with you.

Nikíta. Eh! There he goes rambling! Come to the table.

Akím. You're in your riches same as in a net—you're in a net, I mean. Ah, Nikíta, it's the soul that God needs!

Nikíta. Now really, what right have you to reprove me in my own house? Why do you keep on at me? Am I a child that you can pull by the hair? Nowadays those things have been dropped!

Akím. That's true. I have heard that nowadays, what d'ye call it, that nowadays children pull their fathers' beards, I mean! But that's ruin, that's ruin, I mean!

Nikíta (*angrily*). We are living without help from you, and it's you who came to us with your wants!

Akím. The money? There's your money! I'll go begging, begging I mean, before I'll take it, I mean.

Nikíta. That's enough! Why be angry and upset the whole company!

[*Holds him by the arm.*

Akím (*shrieks*). Let go! I'll not stay. I'd rather sleep under some fence than in the midst of your filth! Faugh! God forgive me!

[*Exit.*

Nikíta. Here's a go!

Akím (*reopens the door*). Come to your senses, Nikíta! It's the soul that God wants!

[*Exit.*

Akoulína (*takes cups*). Well, shall I pour out the tea?

[*Takes a cup. All are silent.*

Mítritch (*roars*). Oh Lord be merciful to me a sinner!

[*All start.*

Nikíta (*lies down on the bench*). Oh, it's dull, it's dull! (*To* Akoulína.) Where's the concertina?

Akoulína. The concertina? He's bethought himself of

it. Why, you took it to be mended. I've poured out your tea. Drink it!

Nikíta. I don't want it! Put out the light. . . Oh, how dull I feel, how dull!

[*Sobs.*]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

Autumn. Evening. The moon is shining. The stage represents the interior of courtyard. The scenery at the back shows, in the middle, the back porch of the hut. To the right the winter half of the hut and the gate; to the left the summer half and the cellar. To the right of the stage is a shed. The sound of tipsy voices and shouts are heard from the hut.[1] SECOND NEIGHBOR WOMAN *comes out of the hut and beckons to* FIRST NEIGHBOR WOMAN.

Second Neighbor. How's it Akoulína has not shown herself?

First Neighbor. Why hasn't she shown herself? She'd have been glad to; but she's too ill, you know. The suitor's relatives have come, and want to see the girl; and she, my dear, she's lying in the cold hut and can't come out, poor thing!

Second Neighbor. But how's that?

First Neighbor. They say she's been bewitched by an evil eye! She's got pains in the stomach!

Second Neighbor. You don't say so?

First Neighbor. What else could it be?

[*Whispers.*

Second Neighbor. Dear me! There's a go! But his relatives will surely find it out?

First Neighbor. They find it out! They're all drunk! Besides, they are chiefly after her dowry. Just think what they give with the girl! Two furs, my dear, six dresses, a French shawl, and I don't know how many pieces of linen, and money as well,—two hundred roubles, it's said!

Second Neighbor. That's all very well, but even money

[1] Where not otherwise mentioned in the stage directions, it is always the winter half of the hut that is referred to as "the hut." The summer half is not heated, and not used in winter under ordinary circumstances.

can't give much pleasure in the face of such a disgrace.

First Neighbor. Hush! . . . There's his father, I think.

[*They cease talking and go into the hut.*

[*The* SUITOR'S FATHER *comes out of the hut hiccoughing.*

The Father. Oh, I'm all in a sweat. It's awfully hot! Will just cool myself a bit. (*Stands puffing.*) The Lord only knows what—something is not right. I can't feel happy.—Well, it's the old woman's affair.

[*Enter* MATRYÓNA *from hut.*

Matryóna. And I was just thinking, where's the father? Where's the father? And here you are, dear friend. . . . Well, dear friend, the Lord be thanked! Everything is as honorable as can be! When one's arranging a match one should not boast. And I have never learnt to boast. But as you've come about the right business, so with the Lord's help, you'll be grateful to me all your life! She's a wonderful girl! There's no other like her in all the district!

The Father. That's true enough, but how about the money?

Matryóna. Don't you trouble about the money! All she had from her father goes with her. And it's more than one gets easily, as things are nowadays. Three times fifty roubles!

The Father. We don't complain, but it's for our own child. Naturally we want to get the best we can.

Matryóna. I'll tell you straight, friend: if it hadn't been for me, you'd never have found anything like her! They've had an offer from the Karmílins, but I stood out against it. And as for the money, I'll tell you truly: when her father, God be merciful to his soul, was dying, he gave orders that the widow should take Nikíta into the homestead —of course I know all about it from my son,—and the money was to go to Akoulína. Why, another one might have thought of his own interests, but Nikíta gives everything clean! It's no trifle. Fancy what a sum it is!

The Father. People are saying that more money was left her? The lad's sharp too!

Matryóna. Oh, dear soul alive! A slice in another's hand always looks big; all she had will be handed over. I tell you, throw doubts to the wind and make all sure! What a girl she is! as fresh as a daisy!

The Father. That's so. But my old woman and I were only wondering about the girl; why has she not come out? We've been thinking, suppose she's sickly?

Matryóna. Ah, ah. . . . Who? She? Sickly? Why, there's none to compare with her in the district. The girl's as sound as a bell; you can't pinch her. But you saw her the other day! And as for work, she's wonderful! She's a bit deaf, that's true, but there are spots on the sun, you know. And her not coming out, you see, it's from an evil eye! A spell's been cast on her! And I know the bitch who's done the business! They know of the betrothal and they bewitched her. But I know a counter-spell. The girl will get up to-morrow. Don't you worry about the girl!

The Father. Well, of course, the thing's settled.

Matryóna. Yes, of course! Don't you turn back. And don't forget me, I've had a lot of trouble. Don't forget . . .

[*A woman's voice from the hut.*

Voice. If we are to go, let's go. Come along, Iván!

The Father. I'm coming.

[*Exeunt. Guests crowd together in the passage and prepare to go away.*

Nan (*runs out of the hut and calls to* ANÍSYA). Mother!

Anísya (*from inside.*) What d'you want?

Nan. Mother, come here, or they'll hear.

[ANÍSYA *enters and they go together to the shed.*

Anísya. Well? What is it? Where's Akoulína?

Nan. She's gone into the barn. It's awful what's she's doing there! I'm blest! "I can't bear it," she says. "I'll scream," she says, "I'll scream out loud." Blest if she didn't.

Anísya. She'll have to wait. We'll see our visitors off first.

Nan. Oh, mother! She's so bad! And she's angry too.

"What's the good of their drinking my health?" she says. "I shan't marry," she says. "I shall die," she says. Mother, supposing she does die! It's awful. I'm so frightened!

Anísya. No fear, she'll not die. But don't you go near her. Come along.

[*Exit* Anísya *and* Nan.

Mítritch (*comes in at the gate and begins collecting the scattered hay*). Oh, Lord! Merciful Nicholas! What a lot of liquor they've been and swilled, and the smell they've made! It smells even out here! But no, I don't want any, drat it! See how they've scattered the hay about. They don't eat it, but only trample it under foot. A truss gone before you know it. Oh, that smell, it seems to be just under my nose! Drat it! (*Yawns.*) It's time to go to sleep! But I don't care to go into the hut. It seems to float just round my nose! It has a strong scent, the damned stuff! (*The guests are heard driving off.*) They're off at last. Oh Lord! Merciful Nicholas! There they go, binding themselves and gulling one another. And it's all gammon!

[*Enter* Nikíta.

Nikíta. Mítritch, you get off to sleep and I'll put this straight.

Mítritch. All right, you throw it to the sheep. Well, have you seen 'em all off?

Nikíta. Yes, they're off! But things are not right! I don't know what to do!

Mítritch. It's a fine mess. But there's the Foundlings'[1] for that sort of thing. Whoever likes may drop one there; they'll take 'em all. Give 'em as many as you like, they ask no questions, and even pay—if the mother goes in as a wet-nurse. It's easy enough nowadays.

Nikíta. But mind, Mítritch, don't go blabbing.

Mítritch. It's no concern of mine. Cover the tracks as you think best. Dear me, how you smell of liquor! I'll go in. Oh, Lord!

[*Exit, yawning.*

[1] The Foundlings' Hospital in Moscow, where 80 to 90 per cent of the children die.

[NIKÍTA *is long silent. Sits down on a sledge.*

Nikíta. Here's a go!

[*Enter* ANÍSYA.

Anísya. Where are you?

Nikíta. Here.

Anísya. What are you doing there? There's no time to be lost! We must take it out directly!

Nikíta. What are we to do?

Anísya. I'll tell you what you are to do. And you'll have to do it!

Nikíta. You'd better take it to the Foundlings'—if anything.

Anísya. Then you'd better take it there yourself if you like! You've a hankering for smut, but you're weak when it comes to settling up, I see!

Nikíta. What's to be done?

Anísya. Go down into the cellar, I tell you, and dig a hole!

Nikíta. Couldn't you manage, somehow, some other way?

Anísya (*imitating him*). "Some other way?" Seems we can't "some other way!" You should have thought about it a year ago. Do what you're told to!

Nikíta. Oh, dear, what a go!

[*Enter* NAN.

Nan. Mother! Grandmother's calling! I think sister's got a baby! I'm blest if it didn't scream!

Anísya. What are you babbling about? Plague take you! It's kittens whining there. Go into the hut and sleep, or I'll give it you!

Nan. Mammy dear, truly, I swear . . .

Anísya (*raising her arm as if to strike*). I'll give it you! You be off and don't let me catch sight of you! (*Nan runs into hut. To Nikíta.*) Do as you're told, or else mind!

[*Exit.*

Nikíta (*alone. After a long silence*). Here's a go! Oh, these women! What a fix! Says you should have thought of it a year ago. When's one to think beforehand? When's one to think? Why, last year this Anísya dangled after

me. What was I to do? Am I a monk? The master died; and I covered my sin as was proper, so I was not to blame there. Aren't there lots of such cases? And then those powders. Did I put her up to that? Why, had I known what the bitch was up to, I'd have killed her! I'm sure I should have killed her! She's made me her partner in these horrors—that jade! And she became loathsome to me from that day! She became loathsome, loathsome to me as soon as mother told me about it. I can't bear the sight of her! Well, then, how could I live with her? And then it begun. . . . That wench began hanging round. Well, what was I to do! If I had not done it, some one else would. And this is what comes of it! Still I'm not to blame in this either. Oh, what a go! (*Sits thinking.*) They are bold, these women! What a plan to think of! But I won't have a hand in it!

[*Enter* MATRYÓNA *with a lantern and spade, panting.*

Matryóna. Why are you sitting there like a hen on a perch? What did your wife tell you to do? You just get things ready!

Nikíta. What do you mean to do?

Matryóna. We know what to do. You do your share!

Nikíta. You'll be getting me into a mess!

Matryóna. What? You're not thinking of backing out, are you? Now it's come to this, and you back out!

Nikíta. Think what a thing it would be! It's a living soul.

Matryóna. A living soul indeed! Why, it's more dead than alive. And what's one to do with it? Go and take it to the Foundlings'—it will die just the same, and the rumor will get about, and people will talk, and the girl be left on our hands.

Nikíta. And supposing it's found out?

Matryóna. Not manage to do it in one's own house? We'll manage it so that no one will have an inkling. Only do as I tell you. We women can't do it without a man. There, take the spade, and get it done there,—I'll hold the light.

Nikíta. What am I to get done?

Matryóna (*in a low voice*). Dig a hole; then we'll bring it out and get it out of the way in a trice! There, she's calling again. Now then, get in, and I'll go.

Nikíta. Is it dead then?

Matryóna. Of course it is. Only you must be quick, or else people will notice! They'll see or they'll hear! The rascals must needs know everything. And the policeman went by this evening. Well then, you see (*gives him the spade*), you get down into the cellar and dig a hole right in the corner; the earth is soft there, and you'll smooth it over. Mother earth will not blab to any one; she'll keep it close. Go then; go, dear.

Nikíta. You'll get me into a mess, bother you! I'll go away! You do it alone as best you can!

Anísya (*through the doorway*). Well? Has he dug it?

Matryóna. Why have you come away? What have you done with it?

Anísya. I've covered it with rags. No one can hear it. Well, has he dug it?

Matryóna. He doesn't want to!

Anísya (*springs out enraged*). Doesn't want to! How will he like feeding vermin in prison! I'll go straight away and tell everything to the police! It's all the same if one must perish. I'll go straight and tell!

Nikíta (*taken aback*). What will you tell?

Anísya. What? Everything! Who took the money? You! (Nikíta *is silent.*) And who gave the poison? I did! But you knew! You knew! You knew! We were in agreement!

Matryóna. That's enough now. Nikíta dear, why are you obstinate? What's to be done now? One must take some trouble. Go, honey.

Anísya. See the fine gentleman! He doesn't like it! You've put upon me long enough! You've trampled me under foot! Now it's my turn! Go, I tell you, or else I'll do what I said. . . . There, take the spade; there, now go!

Nikíta. Drat you! Can't you leave a fellow alone! (*Takes the spade, but shrinks.*) If I don't choose to, I'll not go!

Anísya. Not go? (*Begins to shout.*) Neighbors! Heh! heh!

Matryóna (*closes her mouth*). What are you about? You're mad! He'll go. . . . Go, sonny, go, my own.

Anísya. I'll cry murder!

Nikíta. Now stop! Oh, what people! You'd better be quick. . . . As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!

[*Goes towards the cellar.*

Matryóna. Yes, that's just it, honey. If you know how to amuse yourself, you must know how to hide the consequences.

Anísya (*still excited*). He's trampled on me . . . he and his slut! But it's enough! I'm not going to be the only one! Let him also be a murderer! Then he'll know how it feels!

Matryóna. There, there! How she flares up! Don't you be cross, lass, but do things quietly little by little, as it's best. You go to the girl, and he'll do the work.

[*Follows* NIKÍTA *to the cellar with a lantern. He descends into the cellar.*

Anísya. And I'll make him strangle his dirty brat! (*Still excited.*) I've worried myself to death all alone, with Peter's bones weighing on my mind! Let him feel it too! I'll not spare myself; I've said I'll not spare myself!

Nikíta (*from the cellar*). Show a light!

Matryóna (*holds up the lantern to him. To* ANÍSYA). He's digging. Go and bring it.

Anísya. You stay with him, or he'll go away, the wretch! And I'll go and bring it.

Matryóna. Mind, don't forget to baptize it, or I will if you like. Have you a cross?

Anísya. I'll find one. I know how to do it.

[*Exit.*

See at end of Act, Variation, which may be used instead of the following.

Matryóna. How the woman bristled up! But one must allow she's been put upon. Well, but with the Lord's help, when we've covered this business, there'll be an end of it. We'll shove the girl off without any trouble. My

son will live in comfort. The house, thank God, is as full as an egg. They'll not forget me either. Where would they have been without Matryóna? They'd not have known how to contrive things. (*Peering into the cellar.*) Is it ready, sonny?

Nikíta (*puts out his head*). What are you about there? Bring it quick! What are you dawdling for? If it is to be done, let it be done.

Matryóna (*goes towards door of the hut and meets* Anísya. Anísya *comes out with a baby wrapped in rags*). Well, have you baptized it?

Anísya. Why, of course. It was all I could do to take it away—she wouldn't give it up!

[*Comes forward and hands it to* Nikíta.

Nikíta (*does not take it*). You bring it yourself!

Anísya. Take it, I tell you!

[*Throws the baby to him.*

Nikíta (*catches it*). It's alive! Gracious me, it's moving! It's alive! What am I to . . .

Anísya (*snatches the baby from him and throws it into the cellar*). Be quick and smother it, and then it won't be alive! (*Pushes* Nikíta *down.*) It's your doing, and you must finish it.

Matryóna (*sits on the doorstep of the hut*). He's tender-hearted. It's hard on him, poor dear. Well, what of that? Isn't it also his sin?

[Anísya *stands by the cellar.*

Matryóna (*sits looking at her and discourses*). Oh, oh, oh! How frightened he was: well, but what of that? If it *is* hard, it's the only thing to be done. Where was one to put it? And just think, how often it happens that people pray to God to have children! But no, God gives them none; or they are all still-born. Look at our priest's wife now. . . . And here, where it's not wanted, here it lives. (*Looks towards the cellar.*) I suppose he's finished. (*To* Anísya.) Well?

Anísya (*looking into the cellar*). He's put a board on it and is sitting on it. It must be finished!

Matryóna. Oh, oh! One would be glad not to sin, but what's one to do?

[*Re-enter* NIKÍTA *from cellar, trembling all over.*

Nikíta. It's still alive! I can't! It's alive!

Anísya. If it's alive, where are you off to?

[*Tries to stop him.*

Nikíta (*rushes at her*). Go away! I'll kill you! (*Catches hold of her arms; she escapes, he runs after her with the spade.* MATRYÓNA *runs towards him and stops him.* ANÍSYA *runs into the porch.* MATRYÓNA *tries to wrench the spade from him. To his mother.*) I'll kill you! I'll kill you! Go away! (MATRYÓNA *runs to* ANÍSYA *in the porch.* NIKÍTA *stops.*) I'll kill you! I'll kill you all!

Matryóna. That's because he's so frightened! Never mind, it will pass!

Nikíta. What have they made me do? What have they made me do? How it whimpered. . . . How it crunched under me! What have they done with me? . . . And it's really alive, still alive! (*Listens in silence.*) It's whimpering . . . There, it's whimpering.

[*Runs to the cellar.*

Matryóna (*to* ANÍSYA). He's going; it seems he means to bury it. Nikíta, you'd better take the lantern!

Nikíta (*does not heed her, but listens by the cellar door*). I can hear nothing! I suppose it was fancy! (*Moves away, then stops.*) How the little bones crunched under me. Krr . . . kr . . . What have they made me do? (*Listens again.*) Again whimpering! It's really whimpering! What can it be? Mother! Mother, I say!

[*Goes up to her.*

Matryóna. What is it, sonny?

Nikíta. Mother, my own mother, I can't do any more! Can't do any more! My own mother, have some pity on me!

Matryóna. Oh dear, how frightened you are, my darling! Come, come, drink a drop to give you courage!

Nikíta. Mother, mother! It seems my time has come! What have you done with me? How the little bones crunched, and how it whimpered! My own mother! What have you done with me?

[*Steps aside and sits down on the sledge.*

Matryóna. Come, my own, have a drink! It certainly

does seem uncanny at night-time. But wait a bit. When the day breaks, you know, and one day and another passes, you'll forget even to think of it. Wait a bit; when the girl's married we'll even forget to think of it. But you go and have a drink; have a drink! I'll go and put things straight in the cellar myself.

Nikíta (*rouses himself*). Is there any drink left? Perhaps I can drink it off!

[*Exit.*

[Anísya, *who has stood all the time by the door, silently makes way for him.*

Matryóna. Go, go, honey, and I'll set to work! I'll go down myself and dig! Where has he thrown the spade to? (*Finds the spade, and goes down into the cellar.*) Anísya, come here! Hold the light, will you?

Anísya. And what of him?

Matryóna. He's so frightened! You've been too hard with him. Leave him alone, he'll come to his senses. God help him! I'll set to work myself. Put the lantern down here. I can see.

[Matryóna *disappears into the cellar.*

Anísya (*looking towards the door by which* Nikíta *entered the hut*). Well, have you had enough spree? You've been puffing yourself up, but now you'll know how it feels! You'll lose some of your bluster!

Nikíta (*rushes out of the hut towards the cellar*). Mother! Mother, I say!

Matryóna (*puts out her head*). What is it, sonny?

Nikíta (*listening*). Don't bury it, it's alive? Don't you hear? Alive! There—it's whimpering! There . . . quite plain!

Matryóna. How can it whimper? Why, you've flattened it into a pancake! The whole head is smashed to bits!

Nikíta. What is it then? (*Stops his ears.*) It's still whimpering! I am lost! Lost! What have they done with me? . . . Where shall I go?

[*Sits down on the step.*]

CURTAIN

VARIATION

Instead of the end of Act IV. (from the words, "Anísya. I'll find one. I know how to do it. [*Exit*]") *the following variation may be read, and is the one usually acted.*

Scene II

The interior of the hut as in Act I.

Nan *lies on the bench, and is covered with a coat.* Mítritch *is sitting on the oven smoking.*

Mítritch. Dear me! How they've made the place smell! Drat 'em! They've been spilling the fine stuff. Even tobacco don't get rid of the smell! It keeps tickling one's nose so. Oh Lord! But it's bedtime, I guess.

[*Approaches the lamp to put it out.*

Nan (*jumps up, and remains sitting up*). Daddy dear,[1] don't put it out!

Mítritch. Not put it out? Why?

Nan. Didn't you hear them making a row in the yard? (*Listens.*) D'you hear, there in the barn again now?

Mítritch. What's that to you? I guess no one's asked you to mind! Lie down and sleep! And I'll turn down the light.

[*Turns down lamp.*

Nan. Daddy darling! Don't put it right out; leave a little bit if only as big as a mouse's eye, else it's so frightening!

Mítritch (*laughs*). All right, all right. (*Sits down by her.*) What's there to be afraid of?

Nan. How can one help being frightened, daddy! Sister did go on so! She was beating her head against the box! (*Whispers.*) You know, I know . . . a little baby is going to be born. . . . It's already born, I think. . . .

Mítritch. Eh, what a little busybody it is! May the frogs kick her! Must needs know everything. Lie down and sleep! (Nan *lies down.*) That's right! (*Tucks her up.*) That's right! There now, if you know too much you'll grow old too soon.

[1] Nan calls Mítritch "daddy" merely as a term of endearment.

Nan. And you are going to lie on the oven?

Mítritch. Well, of course! What a little silly you are, now I come to look at you! Must needs know everything. (*Tucks her up again, then stands up to go.*) There now, lie still and sleep!

[*Goes up to the oven.*

Nan. It gave just one cry, and now there's nothing to be heard.

Mítritch. Oh Lord! Gracious Nicholas! What is it you can't hear?

Nan. The baby.

Mítritch. There is none, that's why you can't hear it.

Nan. But I heard it! Blest if I didn't hear it! Such a thin voice!

Mítritch. Heard indeed! Much you heard! Well, if you know,—why then it was just such a little girl as you that the bogey popped into his bag and made off with.

Nan. What bogey?

Mítritch. Why, just his very self! (*Climbs up on to the oven.*) The oven is beautifully warm to-night. Quite a treat! Oh Lord! Gracious Nicholas!

Nan. Daddy! are you going to sleep?

Mítritch. What else? Do you think I'm going to sing songs?

[*Silence.*

Nan. Daddy! Daddy, I say! They are digging! they're digging—don't you hear? Blest if they're not, they're digging!

Mítritch. What are you dreaming about? Digging! Digging in the night! Who's digging? The cow's rubbing herself, that's all. Digging indeed! Go to sleep I tell you, else I'll just put out the light!

Nan. Daddy darling, don't put it out! I won't . . . truly, truly, I won't. It's so frightful!

Mítritch. Frightful? Don't be afraid and then it won't be frightful. Look at her, she's afraid, and then says it's frightful. How can it help being frightful if you are afraid? Eh, what a stupid little girl!

[*Silence. The cricket chirps.*

Nan (*whispers*). Daddy! I say, daddy! Are you asleep?

Mítritch. Now then, what d'you want?

Nan. What's the bogey like?

Mítritch. Why, like this! When he finds such a one as you, who won't sleep, he comes with a sack and pops the girl into it, then in he gets himself, head and all, lifts her dress, and gives her a fine whipping!

Nan. What with?

Mítritch. He takes a birch-broom with him.

Nan. But he can't see there—inside the sack!

Mítritch. He'll see, no fear!

Nan. But I'll bite him.

Mítritch. No, friend, him you can't bite!

Nan. Daddy, there's some one coming! Who is it? Oh gracious goodness! Who can it be?

Mítritch. Well, if some one's coming, let them come! What's the matter with you? I suppose it's your mother!

[*Enter* Anísya.

Anísya (Nan *pretends to be asleep*). Mítritch!

Mítritch. What?

Anísya. What's the lamp burning for? We are going to sleep in the summer-hut.

Mítritch. Why, you see I've only just got straight. I'll put the light out all right.

Anísya (*rummages in her box and grumbles*). When a thing's wanted one never can find it!

Mítritch. Why, what is it you are looking for?

Anísya. I'm looking for a cross. Suppose it were to die unbaptized! It would be a sin, you know!

Mítritch. Of course it would! Everything in due order. . . . Have you found it?

Anísya. Yes, I've found it.

[*Exit.*

Mítritch. That's right, else I'd have lent her mine. Oh Lord!

Nan (*jumps up trembling*). Oh, oh, daddy! Don't go to sleep; for goodness' sake, don't! It's so frightful!

Mítritch. What's frightful?

Nan. It will die—the little baby will! At Aunt Irene's the old woman also baptized the baby, and it died!

Mítritch. If it dies, they'll bury it!

Nan. But maybe it wouldn't have died, only old Granny Matryóna's there! Didn't I hear what granny was saying? I heard her! Blest if I didn't!

Mítritch. What did you hear? Go to sleep, I tell you. Cover yourself up, head and all, and let's have an end of it!

Nan. If it lived, I'd nurse it!

Mítritch (*roars*). Oh Lord!

Nan. Where will they put it?

Mítritch. In the right place! It's no business of yours! Go to sleep I tell you, else mother will come; she'll give it you!

[*Silence.*

Nan. Daddy! Eh, daddy! That girl, you know, you were telling about—they didn't kill her?

Mítritch. That girl? Oh yes. That girl turned out all right!

Nan. How was it? You were saying you found her?

Mítritch. Well, we just found her!

Nan. But where did you find her? Do tell!

Mítritch. Why, in their own house; that's where! We came to a village, the soldiers began hunting about in the house, when suddenly there's that same little girl lying on the floor, flat on her stomach. We were going to give her a knock on the head, but all at once I felt that sorry, that I took her up in my arms; but no, she wouldn't let me! Made herself so heavy, quite a hundredweight, and caught hold where she could with her hands, so that one couldn't get them off! Well, so I began stroking her head. It was so bristly,—just like a hedgehog! So I stroked and stroked, and she quieted down at last. I soaked a bit of rusk and gave it her. She understood that, and began nibbling. What were we to do with her? We took her; took her, and began feeding and feeding her, and she got so used to us that we took her with us on the march, and so she went about with us. Ah, she was a fine girl!

Nan. Yes, and not baptized?

Mítritch. Who can tell! They used to say, not altogether. 'Cos why, those people weren't our own.

Nan. Germans?

Mítritch. What an idea! Germans! Not Germans, but Asiatics. They are just the same as Jews, but still not Jews. Polish, yet Asiatics. Curls . . . or, Curdlys is their name. . . . I've forgotten what it is! [1] We called the girl Sáshka. She was a fine girl, Sáshka was! There now, I've forgotten everything I used to know! But that girl—the deuce take her—seems to be before my eyes now! Out of all my time of service, I remember how they flogged me, and I remember that girl. That's all I remember! She'd hang round one's neck, and one 'ud carry her so. That was a girl,—if you wanted a better you'd not find one! We gave her away afterwards. The captain's wife took her to bring up as her daughter. So—she was all right! How sorry the soldiers were to let her go!

Nan. There now, daddy, and I remember when father was dying,—you were not living with us then. Well, he called Nikíta and says, "Forgive me, Nikíta!" he says, and begins to cry. (*Sighs.*) That also felt very sad!

Mítritch. Yes; there now, so it is . . .

Nan. Daddy! Daddy, I say! There they are again, making a noise in the cellar! Oh gracious heavens! Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh, daddy! They'll do something to it! They'll make away with it, and it's so little! Oh, oh!

[*Covers up her head and cries.*

Mítritch (*listening*). Really they're up to some villainy, blow them to shivers! Oh, these women are vile creatures! One can't say much for men either; but women! . . . They are like wild beasts, and stick at nothing!

Nan (*rising*). Daddy; I say, daddy!

Mítritch. Well, what now?

Nan. The other day a traveller stayed the night; he said that when an infant died its soul goes up straight to heaven. Is that true?

Mítritch. Who can tell? I suppose so. Well?

Nan. Oh, it would be best if I died too.

[*Whimpers.*

[1] Probably Kurds.

Mítritch. Then you'd be off the list!

Nan. Up to ten one's an infant, and maybe one's soul would go to God. Else one's sure to go to the bad!

Mítritch. And how to the bad? How should the likes of you not go to the bad? Who teaches you? What do you see? What do you hear? Only vileness! I, though I've not been taught much, still know a thing or two. I'm not quite like a peasant woman. A peasant woman, what is she? Just mud! There are many millions of the likes of you in Russia, and all as blind as moles—knowing nothing! All sorts of spells: how to stop the cattle-plague with a plough, and how to cure children by putting them under the perches in the hen-house! That's what they know!

Nan. Yes, mother also did that!

Mítritch. Yes,—there it is,—just so! So many millions of girls and women, and all like beasts in a forest! As she grows up, so she dies! Never sees anything; never hears anything. A peasant,—he may learn something at the pub, or maybe in prison, or in the army,—as I did. But a woman? Let alone about God, she doesn't even know rightly what Friday it is! Friday! Friday! But ask her what's Friday? She don't know! They're like blind puppies, creeping about and poking their noses into the dung-heap. . . . All they know are their silly songs. Ho, ho, ho, ho! But what they mean by ho-ho, they don't know themselves!

Nan. But I, daddy, I do know half the Lord's Prayer!

Mítritch. A lot you know! But what can one expect of you? Who teaches you? Only a tipsy peasant—with the strap perhaps! That's all the teaching you get! I don't know who'll have to answer for you. For a recruit, the drill-sergeant or the corporal has to answer; but for the likes of you there's no one responsible! Just as the cattle that have no herdsman are the most mischievous, so with you women—you are the stupidest class! The most foolish class is yours!

Nan. Then what's one to do?

Mítritch. That's what one has to do. . . . You just cover up your head and sleep! Oh Lord!

[*Silence. The cricket chirps.*

Nan (*jumps up*). Daddy! Some one's screaming awfully! Blest if some one isn't screaming! Daddy darling, it's coming here!

Mítritch. Cover up your head, I tell you!

[*Enter* NIKÍTA, *followed by* MATRYÓNA.

Nikíta. What have they done with me? What have they done with me?

Matryóna. Have a drop, honey; have a drop of drink! What's the matter?

[*Fetches the spirits and sets the bottle before him.*

Nikíta. Give it here! Perhaps the drink will help me!

Matryóna. Mind! They're not asleep! Here you are, have a drop!

Nikíta. What does it all mean? Why did you plan it? You might have taken it somewhere!

Matryóna (*whispers*). Sit still a bit and drink a little more, or have a smoke. It will ease your thoughts!

Nikíta. My own mother! My turn seems to have come! How it began to whimper, and how the little bones crunched . . . krr . . . I'm not a man now!

Matryóna. Eh, now, what's the use of talking so silly! Of course it does seem fearsome at night, but wait till the daylight comes, and a day or two passes, and you'll forget to think of it!

[*Goes up to* NIKÍTA *and puts her hand on his shoulder.*

Nikíta. Go away from me! What have you done with me?

Matryóna. Come, come, sonny! Now, really, what's the matter with you?

[*Takes his hand.*

Nikíta. Go away from me! I'll kill you! It's all one to me now! I'll kill you!

Matryóna. Oh, oh, how frightened he's got! You should go and have a sleep now!

Nikíta. I have nowhere to go; I'm lost!

Matryóna (*shaking her head*). Oh, oh, I'd better go and tidy things up. He'll sit and rest a bit, and it will pass!

[*Exit.*

[NIKÍTA *sits with his face in his hands.* MÍTRITCH *and* NAN *seem stunned.*

Nikíta. It's whining! It's whining! It is really—there, there, quite plain! She'll bury it, really she will! (*Runs to the door.*) Mother, don't bury it, it's alive. . . .

[*Enter* MATRYÓNA.

Matryóna (*whispers*). Now then, what is it? Heaven help you! Why won't you get to rest? How can it be alive? All its bones are crushed!

Nikíta. Give me more drink. [*Drinks.*]

Matryóna. Now go, sonny. You'll fall asleep now all right.

Nikíta (*stands listening*). Still alive . . . there . . . it's whining! Don't you hear? . . . There!

Matryóna (*whispers*). No! I tell you!

Nikíta. Mother! My own mother! I've ruined my life! What have you done with me? Where am I to go?

[*Runs out of the hut;* MATRYÓNA *follows him.*

Nan. Daddy dear, darling, they've smothered it!

Mítritch (*angrily*). Go to sleep, I tell you! Oh dear, may the frogs kick you! I'll give it to you with the broom! Go to sleep, I tell you!

Nan. Daddy, my treasure! Something is catching hold of my shoulders, something is catching hold with its paws! Daddy dear . . . really, really . . . I must go! Daddy, darling! let me get up on the oven with you! Let me, for Heaven's sake! Catching hold . . . catching hold! Oh!

[*Runs to the stove.*

Mítritch. See how they've frightened the girl. . . . What vile creatures they are! May the frogs kick them! Well then, climb up.

Nan (*climbs on oven*). But don't you go away!

Mítritch. Where should I go to? Climb up, climb up! Oh Lord! Gracious Nicholas! Holy Mother! . . . How they have frightened the girl. (*Covers her up.*) There's a little fool—really a little fool! How they've frightened her; really, they are vile creatures! The deuce take 'em!

CURTAIN

ACT V

Scene I

In front of scene a stack-stand, to the left a thrashing ground, to the right a barn. The barn doors are open. Straw is strewn about in the doorway. The hut with yard and out-buildings is seen in the background, whence proceed sounds of singing and of a tambourine. Two Girls *are walking past the barn towards the hut.*

First Girl. There, you see we've managed to pass without so much as getting our boots dirty! But to come by the street is terribly muddy! (*Stop and wipe their boots on the straw.* First Girl *looks at the straw and sees something.*) What's that?

Second Girl (*looks where the straw lies and sees some one*). It's Mítritch, their laborer. Just look how drunk he is!

First Girl. Why, I thought he didn't drink.

Second Girl. It seems he didn't, until it was going around.

First Girl. Just see! He must have come to fetch some straw. Look! he's got a rope in his hand, and he's fallen asleep.

Second Girl (*listening*). They're still singing the praises.[1] So I s'pose the bride and bridegroom have not yet been blessed! They say Akoulína didn't even lament![2]

First Girl. Mammie says she is marrying against her will. Her stepfather threatened her, or else she'd not have done it for the world! Why, you know what they've been saying about her?

[1] This refers to the songs customary at the wedding of Russian peasants, praising the bride and bridegroom.

[2] It is etiquette for a bride to bewail the approaching loss of her maidenhood.

Marína (*catching up the* GIRLS). How d'you you do, lassies?

Girls. How d'you do?

Marína. Going to the wedding, my dears?

First Girl. It's nearly over! We've come just to have a look.

Marína. Would you call my old man for me? Simon, from Zoúevo; but surely you know him?

First Girl. To be sure we do; he's a relative of the bridegroom's, I think?

Marína. Of course; he's my old man's nephew, the bridegroom is.

Second Girl. Why don't you go yourself? Fancy not going to a wedding!

Marína. I have no mind for it, and no time either. It's time for us to be going home. We didn't mean to come to the wedding. We were taking oats to town. We only stopped to feed the horse, and they made my old man go in.

First Girl. Where did you put up then? At Fyódoritch's?

Marína. Yes. Well then, I'll stay here and you go and call him, my dear—my old man. Call him, my pet, and say "Your missis, Marína, says you must go now!" His mates are harnessing.

First Girl. Well, all right—if you won't go in yourself.

[*The* GIRLS *go away towards the house along a footpath. Sounds of songs and tambourine.*

Marína (*alone, stands thinking*). I might go in, but I don't like to, because I have not met him since that day he threw me over. It's more than a year now. But I'd have liked to have a peep and see how he lives with his Anísya. People say they don't get on. She's a coarse woman, and with a character of her own. I should think he's remembered me more than once. He's been caught by the idea of a comfortable life and has changed me for it. But, God help him, I don't cherish ill-will! Then it hurt! Oh dear, it was pain! But now it's worn away and been forgotten. But I'd like to have seen him. (*Looks towards hut and sees* NIKÍTA.) Look there! Why, he is coming here! Have the girls told him? How's it he has left his guests? I'll

go away! (NIKÍTA *approaches, hanging his head down, swinging his arms, and muttering.*) And how sullen he looks!

Nikíta (*sees and recognises* MARÍNA). Marína, dearest friend, little Marína, what do you want?

Marína. I have come for my old man.

Nikíta. Why didn't you come to the wedding? You might have had a look round, and a laugh at my expense!

Marína. What have I to laugh at? I've come for my husband.

Nikíta. Ah, Marína dear!

[*Tries to embrace her.*

Marína (*steps angrily aside*). You'd better drop that sort of thing, Nikíta! What has been is past! I've come for my husband. Is he in your house?

Nikíta. So I must not remember the past? You won't let me?

Marína. It's no use recalling the past! What used to be is over now!

Nikíta. And can never come back, you mean?

Marína. And will never come back! But why have you gone away? You, the master,—and to go away from the feast!

Nikíta (*sits down on the straw*). Why have I gone away? Eh, if you knew, if you had any idea . . . I'm dull, Marína, so dull that I wish my eyes would not see! I rose from the table and left them, to get away from the people. If I could only avoid seeing any one!

Marína (*coming nearer to him*). How's that?

Nikíta. This is how it is: when I eat, it's there! When I drink, it's there! When I sleep, it's there! I'm so sick of it—so sick! But it's chiefly because I'm all alone that I'm so sick, Marína. I have no one to share my trouble.

Marína. You can't live your life without trouble, Nikíta. However, I've wept over mine and wept it away.

Nikíta. The former, the old trouble! Ah, dear friend, you've wept yours away, and I've got mine up to there!

[*Puts his hand to his throat.*

Marína. But why?

Nikíta. Why, I'm sick of my whole life! I am sick of

myself! Ah, Marína, why did you not know how to keep me? You've ruined me, and yourself too! Is this life?

Marína (*stands by the barn crying, but restrains herself*). I do not complain of my life, Nikíta! God grant every one a life like mine. I do not complain. I confessed to my old man at the time, and he forgave me. And he does not reproach me. I'm not discontented with my life. The old man is quiet, and is fond of me, and I keep his children clothed and washed! He is really kind to me. Why should I complain? It seems God willed it so. And what's the matter with your life? You are rich . . .

Nikíta. My life! . . . It's only that I don't wish to disturb the wedding feast, or I'd take this rope here (*takes hold of the rope on the straw*) and throw it across that rafter there. Then I'd make a noose and stretch it out, and I'd climb on to that rafter and jump down with my head in the noose! That's what my life is!

Marína. That's enough! Lord help you!

Nikíta. You think I'm joking? You think I'm drunk? I'm not drunk! To-day even drink takes no hold on me! I'm devoured by misery! Misery is eating me up completely, so that I care for nothing! Oh little Marína, it's only with you I ever lived! Do you remember how we used to while away the nights together at the railway?

Marína. Don't you rub the sores, Nikíta! I'm bound legally now, and you too. My sin has been forgiven, don't disturb . . .

Nikíta. What shall I do with my heart? Where am I to turn to?

Marína. What's there to be done? You've got a wife. Don't go looking at others, but keep to your own! You loved Anísya, then go on loving her!

Nikíta. Oh, that Anísya, she's gall and wormwood to me, but she's round my feet like rank weeds!

Marína. Whatever she is, still she's your wife. . . . But what's the use of talking; you'd better go to your visitors, and send my husband to me.

Nikíta. Oh dear, if you knew the whole business . . . but there's no good talking!

[*Enter* MARÍNA'S *husband, red and tipsy, and* NAN.

Marína's Husband. Marína! Missis! My old woman! are you here?

Nikíta. There's your husband calling you. Go!

Marína. And you?

Nikíta. I? I'll lie down here for a bit!

[*Lies down on the straw.*

Husband. Where is she then?

Nan. There she is, near the barn.

Husband. What are you standing there for? Come to the feast! The hosts want you to come and do them honor! The wedding party is just going to start, and then we can go too.

Marína (*going towards her husband*). I didn't want to go in.

Husband. Come on, I tell you! You'll drink a glass to our nephew Peter's health, the rascal! Else the hosts might take offense! There's plenty of time for our business.

[MARÍNA'S *husband puts his arm around her, and goes reeling out with her.*

Nikíta (*rises and sits down on the straw*). Ah, now that I've seen her, life seems more sickening than ever! It was only with her that I ever really lived! I've ruined my life for nothing! I've done for myself! (*Lies down.*) Where can I go? If mother earth would but open and swallow me!

Nan (*sees* NIKÍTA, *and runs towards him*). Daddy, I say, daddy! They're looking for you! Her godfather and all of them have already blessed her. Truly they have, they're getting cross!

Nikíta (*aside*). Where can I go to?

Nan. What? What are you saying?

Nikíta. I'm not saying anything! Don't bother!

Nan. Daddy! Come, I say! (NIKÍTA *is silent,* NAN *pulls him by the hand.*) Dad, go and bless them! My word, they're angry, they're grumbling!

Nikíta (*drags away his hand*). Leave me alone!

Nan. Now then!

Nikíta (*threatens her with the rope*). Go, I say! I'll give it you!

Nan. Then I'll send mother!

[*Runs away.*

Nikíta (*rises*). How can I go? How can I take the holy icón in my hands? How am I to look her in the face! (*Lies down again.*) Oh, if there were a hole in the ground, I'd jump in! No one should see me, and I should see no one! (*Rises again.*) No, I shan't go. . . . May they all go to the devil, I shan't go! (*Takes the rope and makes a noose, and tries it on his neck.*) That's the way!

[*Enter* MATRYÓNA. NIKÍTA *sees his mother, takes the rope off his neck, and again lies down in the straw.*

Matryóna (*comes in hurriedly*). Nikíta! Nikíta, I say! He don't even answer! Nikíta, what's the matter? Have you had a drop too much? Come, Nikíta dear; come, honey! The people are tired of waiting.

Nikíta. Oh dear, what have you done with me? I'm a lost man!

Matryóna. But what is the matter then? Come, my own; come, give them your blessing, as is proper and honorable, and then it'll all be over! Why, the people are waiting!

Nikíta. How can I give blessings?

Matryóna. Why, in the usual way! Don't you know?

Nikíta. I know, I know! But who is it I am to bless? What have I done to her?

Matryóna. What have you done? Eh, now he's going to remember it! Why, who knows anything about it? Not a soul! And the girl is going of her own accord.

Nikíta. Yes, but how?

Matryóna. Because she's afraid, of course. But still she's going. Besides, what's to be done now? She should have thought sooner! Now she can't refuse. And his kinsfolks can't take offense either. They saw the girl twice, and get money with her too! It's all safe and sound!

Nikíta. Yes, but what's in the cellar?

Matryóna (*laughs*). In the cellar? Why, cabbages, mushrooms, potatoes, I suppose! Why remember the past?

Nikíta. I'd be only too glad to forget it; but I can't! When I let my mind go, it's just as if I heard. . . . Oh, what have you done with me?

Matryóna. Now, what are you humbugging for?

Nikíta (*turns face downward*). Mother! Don't torment me! I've got it up to there!

[*Puts his hand to his throat.*

Matryóna. Still it has to be done! As it is, people are talking. "The master's gone away and won't come; he can't make up his mind to give his blessing." They'll be putting two and two together. As soon as they see you're frightened they'll begin guessing. "The thief none suspect who walks bold and erect!" But you'll be getting out of the frying-pan into the fire! Above all, lad, don't show it; don't lose courage, else they'll find out all the more!

Nikíta. Oh dear! You have snared me into a trap!

Matryóna. That'll do, I tell you; come along! Come in and give your blessing, as is right and honorable;—and there's an end of the matter!

Nikíta (*lies face down*). I can't!

Matryóna (*aside*). What has come over him? He seemed all right, and suddenly this comes over him! It seems he's bewitched! Get up, Nikíta! See! There's Anísya coming; she's left her guests!

[Anísya *enters, dressed up, red and tipsy.*

Anísya. Oh, how nice it is, mother! So nice, so respectable! And how the people are pleased. . . . But where is he?

Matryóna. Here, honey, he's here; he's laid down on the straw and there he lies! He won't come!

Nikíta (*looking at his wife*). Just see, she's tipsy too! When I look at her my heart seems to turn! How can one live with her? (*Turns on his face.*) I'll kill her some day! It'll be worse then!

Anísya. Only look, how he's got all among the straw! Is it the drink? (*Laughs.*) I'd not mind lying down there with you, but I've no time! Come, I'll lead you! It is so nice in the house! It's a treat to look on! A concertina! And the women singing so well! All tipsy! Everything so respectable, so nice!

Nikíta. What's nice?

Anísya. The wedding—such a jolly wedding! They all say it's quite an uncommon fine wedding. All so respectable, so nice! Come along! We'll go together! I have had a drop, but I can give you a hand yet!

[*Takes his hand.*

Nikíta (*pulls it back with disgust*). Go alone! I'll come!

Anísya. What are you humbugging for? We've got rid of all the bother, we've got rid of her as came between us; now we have nothing to do but to live and be merry! And all so respectable, and quite legal! I'm so pleased! I have no words for it! It's just as if I were going to marry you over again! And oh, the people, they *are* pleased! They're all thanking us! And the guests are all of the best: Ivan Moséitch is there, and the Police Officer; they've also been singing songs of praise!

Nikíta. Then you should have stayed with them! What have you come for?

Anísya. True enough, I must go back! Else what does it look like! The hosts both go and leave the visitors! And the guests are all of the best!

Nikíta (*gets up and brushes the straw off himself*). Go, and I'll come at once!

Matryóna. Just see! He listens to the young bird, but wouldn't listen to the old one! He would not hear me, but he follows his wife at once! (MATRYÓNA *and* ANÍSYA *turn to go.*) Well, are you coming?

Nikíta. I'll come directly! You go and I'll follow! I'll come and give my blessing! (*The women stop.*) Go on! I'll follow! Now then, go! (*Exit women. Sits down and takes his boots off.*) Yes, I'm going! A likely thing! No, you'd better look at the rafter for me! I'll fix the noose and jump with it from the rafter, then you can look for me! And the rope is here just handy. (*Ponders.*) I'd have got over it, over any sorrow—I'd have got over that. But this now—here it is, deep in my heart, and I can't get over it! (*Looks towards the yard.*) Surely she's not coming back? (*Imitates* ANÍSYA.) "So nice, so nice. I'd lie down here with you." Oh, the baggage! Well, then, here I am!

Come and cuddle when they've taken me down from the rafter! There's only one way!

[*Takes the rope and pulls it.*

[MÍTRITCH, *who is tipsy, sits up and won't let go of the rope.*

Mítritch. Shan't give it up! Shan't give it to no one! I'll bring it myself! I said I'd bring the straw—and so I will! Nikíta, is that you? (*Laughs.*) Oh, the devil! Have you come to get the straw?

Nikíta. Give me the rope!

Mítritch. No, you wait a bit! The peasants sent me! I'll bring it . . . (*Rises to his feet and begins getting the straw together, but reels for a time, then falls.*) It has beaten me. It's stronger . . .

Nikíta. Give me the rope!

Mítritch. Didn't I say I won't! Oh, Nikíta, you're as stupid as a hog! (*Laughs.*) I love you, but you're a fool! You see that I'm drunk . . . devil take you! You think I need you? . . . You just look at me; I'm a Non . . . fool, can't say it—Non-commissioned Officer of Her Majesty's very First Regiment of Grenadier Guards! I've served Tsar and country, loyal and true! But who am I? You think I'm a warrior? No, I'm not a warrior; I'm the very least of men, a poor lost orphan! I swore not to drink, and now I had a smoke, and . . . Well then, do you think I'm afraid of you? No fear; I'm afraid of no man! I've taken to drink, and I'll drink! Now I'll go it for a fortnight; I'll go it hard! I'll drink my last shirt; I'll drink my cap; I'll pawn my passport; and I'm afraid of no one! They flogged me in the army to stop me drinking! They switched and switched! "Well," they say, "will you leave off?" "No," says I! Why should I be afraid of them? Here I am! Such as I am, God made me! I swore off drinking, and didn't drink. Now I've took to drink, and I'll drink! And I fear no man! 'Cos I don't lie; but just as . . . Why should one mind them—such muck as they are! "Here you are," I say; that's me. A priest told me, the devil's the biggest bragger! "As soon," says he, "as you begin to brag, you get frightened; and as soon as you fear men, then the hoofed one just collars you and pushes you

where he likes!" But as I don't fear men, I'm easy! I can spit in the devil's beard, and at the sow his mother! He can't do me no harm! There, put that in your pipe!

Nikíta (*crossing himself*). True enough! What was I about?

[*Throws down the rope.*

Mítritch. What?

Nikíta (*rises*). You tell me not to fear men?

Mítritch. Why fear such muck as they are? You look at 'em in the bath-house! All made of one paste! One has a bigger belly, another a smaller; that's all the difference there is! Fancy being afraid of 'em! Deuce take 'em!

Matryóna (*from the yard*). Well, are you coming?

Nikíta. Ah! Better so! I'm coming!

[*Goes towards yard.*]

Scene II

Interior of hut, full of people, some sitting round tables and others standing. In the front corner Akoulína *and the* Bridegroom. *On one of the tables an Icón and a loaf of rye-bread. Among the visitors are* Marína, *her husband, and a* Police Officer, *also a* Hired Driver, *the* Matchmaker, *and the* Best Man. *The women are singing.* Anísya *carries round the drink. The singing stops.*

The Driver. If we are to go, let's go! The church ain't so near.

The Best Man. All right; you wait a bit till the step-father has given his blessing. But where is he?

Anísya. He is coming—coming at once, dear friends! Have another glass, all of you; don't refuse!

The Matchmaker. Why is he so long? We've been waiting such a time!

Anísya. He's coming; coming directly, coming in no time! He'll be here before one could plait a girl's hair who's had her hair cropped! Drink, friends! (*Offers the drink.*) Coming at once! Sing again, my pets, meanwhile!

The Driver. They've sung all their songs, waiting here!

[*The women sing.* NIKÍTA *and* AKÍM *enter during the singing.*

Nikíta (*holds his father's arm and pushes him in before him*). Go, father; I can't do without you!

Akím. I don't like—I mean what d'ye call it . . .

Nikíta (*to the women*). Enough! Be quiet! (*Looks round the hut.*) Marína, are you there?

The Matchmaker. Go, take the icón, and give them your blessing!

Nikíta. Wait a while! (*Looks round.*) Akoulína, are you there?

Matchmaker. What are you calling everybody for? Where should she be? How queer he seems!

Anísya. Gracious goodness! Why, he's barefoot!

Nikíta. Father, you are here! Look at me! Christian Commune, you are all here, and I am here! I am . . .

[*Falls on his knees.*

Anísya. Nikíta, darling, what's the matter with you? Oh, my head, my head!

Matchmaker. Here's a go!

Matryóna. I did say he was taking too much of that French wine! Come to your senses; what are you about?

[*They try to lift him; he takes no heed of them, but looks in front of him.*

Nikíta. Christian Commune! I have sinned, and I wish to confess!

Matryóna (*shakes him by the shoulder*). Are you mad? Dear friends, he's gone crazy! He must be taken away!

Nikíta (*shakes her off*). Leave me alone! And you, father, hear me! And first, Marína, look here! (*Bows to the ground to her and rises.*) I have sinned towards you! I promised to marry you, I tempted you, and forsook you! Forgive me, in Christ's name!

[*Again bows to the ground before her.*

Anísya. And what are you drivelling about? It's not becoming! No one wants to know! Get up! It's like your impudence!

Matryóna. Oh, oh, he's bewitched! And however did

it happen? It's a spell! Get up! what nonsense are you jabbering?

[*Pulls him.*

Nikíta (*shakes his head*). Don't touch me! Forgive me my sin towards you, Marína! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

[MARÍNA *covers her face with her hands in silence.*

Anísya. Get up, I tell you! Don't be so impudent! What are you thinking about—to recall it? Enough humbug! It's shameful! Oh my poor head! He's quite crazy!

Nikíta (*pushes his wife away and turns to* AKOULÍNA). Akoulína, now I'll speak to you! Listen, Christian Commune! I'm a fiend, Akoulína! I have sinned against you! Your father died no natural death! He was poisoned!

Anísya (*screams*). Oh my head! What's he about?

Matryóna. The man's beside himself! Lead him away!

[*The folk come up and try to seize him.*

Akím (*motions them back with his arms*). Wait! You lads, what d'ye call it, wait, I mean!

Nikíta. Akoulína, I poisoned him! Forgive me, in Christ's name!

Akoulína (*jumps up*). He's telling lies! I know who did it!

Matchmaker. What are you about? You sit still!

Akím. Oh Lord, what sins, what sins!

Police Officer. Seize him, and send for the Elder! We must draw up an indictment and have witnesses to it! Get up and come here!

Akím (*to* POLICE OFFICER). Now you—with the bright buttons—I mean, you wait! Let him, what d'ye call it, speak out, I mean!

Police Officer. Mind, old man, and don't interfere! I have to draw up an indictment!

Akím. Eh, what a fellow you are; wait, I say! Don't talk, I mean, about, what d'ye call it, 'ditements' Here God's work is being done. . . . A man is confessing, I mean! And you, what d'ye call it . . . 'ditements!

Police Officer. The Elder!

Akím. Let God's work be done, I mean, and then you. I mean you, do your business!

Nikíta. And, Akoulína, my sin is great towards you; I seduced you; forgive me in Christ's name!

[*Bows to the ground before her.*

Akoulína (*leaves the table*). Let me go! I shan't be married! He told me to, but I shan't now!

Police Officer. Repeat what you have said.

Nikíta. Wait, sir, let me finish!

Akím (*with rapture*). Speak, my son! Tell everything—you'll feel better! Confess to God, don't fear men! God—God! It is He!

Nikíta. I poisoned the father, dog that I am, and I ruined the daughter! She was in my power, and I ruined her, and her baby!

Akoulína. True, that's true!

Nikíta. I smothered the baby in the cellar with a board! I sat on it and smothered it—and its bones crunched! (*Weeps.*) And I buried it! I did it, all alone!

Akoulína. He raves! I told him to!

Nikíta. Don't shield me! I fear no one now! Forgive me, Christian Commune!

[*Bows to the ground.*

[*Silence.*

Police Officer. Bind him! The marriage is evidently off!

[*Men come up with their belts.*

Nikíta. Wait, there's plenty of time! (*Bows to the ground before his father.*) Father, dear father, forgive me too,—fiend that I am! You told me from the first, when I took to bad ways, you said then, "If a claw is caught, the bird is lost!" I would not listen to your words, dog that I was, and it has turned out as you said! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

Akím (*rapturously*). God will forgive you, my own son! (*Embraces him.*) You have had no mercy on yourself; He will show mercy on you! God—God! It is He!

[*Enter* Elder.

Elder. There are witnesses enough here.

Police Officer. We will have the examination at once.

[Nikíta *is bound.*

Akoulina (*goes and stands by his side*). I shall tell the truth! Ask me!

Nikita (*bound*). No need to ask! I did it all myself. The design was mine, and the deed was mine. Take me where you like. I will say no more!

CURTAIN

FRUITS OF CULTURE

CHARACTERS

Leoníd Fyódoritch Zvezdíntsef. *A retired Lieutenant of the Horse Guards. Owner of more than 60,000 acres of land in various provinces. A fresh-looking, bland, agreeable gentleman of 60. Believes in Spiritualism, and likes to astonish people with his wonderful stories.*

Anna Pávlovna Zvezdíntseva. *Wife of Leoníd. Stout; pretends to be young; quite taken up with the conventionalities of life; despises her husband, and blindly believes in her doctor. Very irritable.*

Betsy. *Their daughter. A young woman of 20, fast, tries to be mannish, wears a pince-nez, flirts and giggles. Speaks very quickly and distinctly.*

Vasíly Leoníditch Zvezdíntsef. *Their son, aged 25; has studied law, but has no definite occupation. Member of the Cycling Club, Jockey Club, and of the Society for Promoting the Breeding of Hounds. Enjoys perfect health, and has imperturbable self-assurance. Speaks loud and abruptly. Is either perfectly serious—almost morose, or is noisily gay and laughs loud. Is nicknamed Vovo.*

Alexéy Vladímirovitch Krougosvétlof. *A professor and scientist of about 50, with quiet and pleasantly self-possessed manners, and quiet, deliberate, harmonious speech. Likes to talk. Is mildly disdainful of those who do not agree with him. Smokes much. Is lean and active.*

The Doctor. *About 40. Healthy, fat, red-faced, loud-voiced, and rough; with a self-satisfied smile constantly on his lips.*

Márya Konstantínovna. *A girl of 20, from the Conservatoire, teacher of music. Wears a fringe, and is super-fashionably dressed. Obsequious, and gets easily confused.*

Petrístchef. *About 28; has taken his degree in philology, and is looking out for a position. Member of the same clubs as Vasíly Leoníditch, and also of the Society for the Organisation of Calico Balls.*[1] *Is bald-headed, quick in movement and speech, and very polite.*

The Baroness. *A pompous lady of about 50, slow in her movements, speaks with monotonous intonation.*

The Princess. *A society woman, a visitor.*

Her Daughter. *An affected young society woman, a visitor.*

The Countess. *An ancient dame, with false hair and teeth. Moves with great difficulty.*

Grossman. *A dark, nervous, lively man of Jewish type. Speaks very loud.*

The Fat Lady: Márya Vasílyevna Tolboúhina. *A very dis-*

[1] Economical balls at which the ladies are bound to appear in dresses made of cotton materials.

tinguished, rich, and kindly woman, acquainted with all the notable people of the last and present generations. Very stout. Speaks hurriedly, trying to be heard above every one else. Smokes.

Baron Klíngen (*nicknamed* Koko). *A graduate of Petersburg University. Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Attaché to an Embassy. Is perfectly correct in his deportment, and therefore enjoys peace of mind and is quietly gay.*

Two Silent Ladies.

Sergéy Ivánitch Sahátof. *About* 50, *an ex-Assistant Minister of State. An elegant gentleman, of wide European culture, engaged in nothing and interested in everything. His carriage is dignified and at times even severe.*

Theodore Ivánitch. *Personal attendant on Zvezdíntsef, aged about* 60. *A man of some education and fond of information. Uses his pince-nez and pocket-handkerchief too much, unfolding the latter very slowly. Takes an interest in politics. Is kindly and sensible.*

Gregory. *A footman, about* 28, *handsome, profligate, envious, and insolent.*

Jacob. *Butler, about* 40, *a bustling, kindly man, to whom the interests of his family in the village are all-important.*

Simon. *The butler's assistant, about* 20, *a healthy, fresh, peasant lad, fair, beardless as yet; calm and smiling.*

The Coachman. *A man of about* 35, *a dandy. Has moustaches but no beard. Rude and decided.*

A Discharged Man-Cook. *About* 45, *dishevelled, unshaved, bloated, yellow and trembling. Dressed in a ragged, light summer-overcoat and dirty trousers. Speaks hoarsely, ejecting the words abruptly.*

The Servants' Cook. *A talkative, dissatisfied woman of* 30.

The Doorkeeper. *A retired soldier.*

Tánya (Tatyána Márkovna). *Lady's-maid,* 19, *energetic, strong, merry, with quickly-changing moods. At moments, when strongly excited, she shrieks with joy.*

First Peasant. *About* 60. *Has served as village Elder. Imagines that he knows how to treat gentlefolk, and likes to hear himself talk.*

Second Peasant. *About* 45, *head of a family. A man of few words. Rough and truthful. The father of Simon.*

Third Peasant. *About* 70. *Wears shoes of plaited bast. Is nervous, restless, hurried, and tries to cover his confusion by much talking.*

First Footman (*in attendance on the Countess*). *An old man, with old-fashioned manners, and proud of his place.*

Second Footman. *Of enormous size, strong, and rude.*

A Porter from a Fashionable Dressmaker's Shop. *A fresh-faced man in dark-blue long coat. Speaks firmly, emphatically, and clearly.*

The action takes place in Moscow, in Zvezdíntsef's house.

ACT I

The entrance hall of a wealthy house in Moscow. There are three doors: the front door, the door of LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH'S *study, and the door of* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *room. A staircase leads up to the other rooms; behind it is another door leading to the servants' quarters.*

SCENE I

Gregory (*looks at himself in the glass and arranges his hair, etc.*). I *am* sorry about those moustaches of mine! "Moustaches are not becoming to a footman," she says! And why? Why, so that any one might see you're a footman,—else my looks might put her darling son to shame. He's a likely one! There's not much fear of his coming anywhere near me, moustaches or no moustaches! (*Smiling into the glass.*) And what a lot of 'em swarm round me. And yet I don't care for any of them as much as for that Tánya. And she only a lady's-maid! Ah well, she's nicer than any young lady. (*Smiles.*) She's a duck! (*Listening.*) Ah, here she comes. (*Smiles.*) Yes, that's her, clattering with her little heels. Oh!

[*Enter* TÁNYA, *carrying a cloak and boots.*

Gregory. My respects to you, Tatyána Márkovna.

Tánya. What are you always looking in the glass for? Do you think yourself so good-looking?

Gregory. Well, and are my looks not agreeable?

Tánya. So, so; neither agreeable nor disagreeable, but just betwixt and between! Why are all those cloaks hanging there?

Gregory. I am just going to put them away, your ladyship! (*Takes down a fur cloak and, wrapping it round her, embraces her.*) I say, Tánya, I'll tell you something . . .

Tánya. Oh, get away, do! What do you mean by it? (*Pulls herself angrily away.*) Leave me alone, I tell you!

Gregory (*looks cautiously around*). Then give me a kiss!

Tánya. Now, really, what are you bothering for? I'll give you such a kiss!

[*Raises her hand to strike.*

Vasíly Leoníditch (*off the scene, rings and then shouts*). Gregory!

Tánya. There now, go! Vasíly Leoníditch is calling you.

Gregory. He'll wait! He's only just opened his eyes! I say, why don't you love me?

Tánya. What sort of loving have you imagined now? I don't love anybody.

Gregory. That's a fib. You love Simon! You have found a nice one to love—a common, dirty-pawed peasant, a butler's assistant!

Tánya. Never mind; such as he is, you are jealous of him!

Vasíly Leoníditch (*off the scene*). Gregory!

Gregory. All in good time. . . . Jealous indeed! Of what? Why, you have only just begun to get licked into shape, and who are you tying yourself up with? Now, wouldn't it be altogether a different matter if you loved me? . . . I say, Tánya . . .

Tánya (*angrily and severely*). You'll get nothing from me, I tell you!

Vasíly Leoníditch (*off the scene*). Gregory!

Gregory. You're mighty particular, ain't you?

Vasíly Leoníditch (*off the scene, shouts persistently, monotonously, and with all his might*). Gregory! Gregory! Gregory!

[TÁNYA *and* GREGORY *laugh.*

Gregory. You should have seen the girls that have been sweet on me.

[*Bell rings.*

Tánya. Well then, go to them, and leave me alone!

Gregory. You are a silly, now I think of it. I'm not Simon!

Tánya. Simon means marriage, and not tomfoolery!

[*Enter* PORTER, *carrying a large cardboard box.*

Porter. Good morning!

Gregory. Good morning! Where are you from?

Porter. From Bourdey's. I've brought a dress, and here's a note for the lady.

Tánya (*taking the note*). Sit down, and I'll take it in.

[*Exit.*

[VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *looks out of the door in shirt-sleeves and slippers.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Gregory!

Gregory. Yes, sir.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Gregory! Don't you hear me call?

Gregory. I've only just come, sir.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Hot water, and a cup of tea.

Gregory. Yes, sir; Simon will bring them directly.

Vasíly Leoníditch. And who is this? Ah, from Bourdier?

Porter. Yes, sir.

[*Exeunt* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *and* GREGORY. *Bell rings.* TÁNYA *runs in at the sound of the bell and opens the front door.*

Tánya (*to* PORTER). Please wait a little.

Porter. I am waiting.

[SAHÁTOF *enters at front door.*

Tánya. I beg your pardon, but the footman has just gone away. This way, sir. Allow me, please.

[*Takes his fur cloak.*

Sahátof (*adjusting his clothes*). Is Leoníd Fyódoritch at home? Is he up?

[*Bell rings.*

Tánya. Oh yes, sir. He's been up a long time.

[DOCTOR *enters and looks around for the footman. Sees* SAHÁTOF *and addresses him in an offhand manner.*

Doctor. Ah, my respects to you!

Sahátof (*looks fixedly at him*). The Doctor, I believe?

Doctor. And I thought you were abroad! Dropped in to see Leoníd Fyódoritch?

Sahátof. Yes. And you? Is any one ill?

Doctor (*laughing*). Not exactly ill but, you know . . . It's awful with these ladies! Sits up at cards till three every morning, and pulls her waist into the shape of a wine-glass. And the lady is flabby and fat, and carries the weight of a good many years on her back.

Sahátof. Is this the way you state your diagnosis to Anna Pávlovna? I should hardly think it quite pleases her!

Doctor (*laughing*). Well, it's the truth. They do all these tricks—and then come derangements of the digestive organs, pressure on the liver, nerves, and all sorts of things, and one has to come and patch them up. It's just awful! (*Laughs.*) And you? You are also a spiritualist, it seems?

Sahátof. I? No, I am not also a spiritualist. . . . Good morning!

[*Is about to go, but is stopped by the* DOCTOR.

Doctor. No! But I can't myself, you know, positively deny the possibility of it, when a man like Krougosvétlof is connected with it all. How can one? Is he not a professor,—a European celebrity? There must be something in it. I should like to see for myself, but I never have the time. I have other things to do.

Sahátof. Yes, yes! Good morning.

[*Exit, bowing slightly.*

Doctor (*to* TÁNYA). Is Anna Pávlovna up?

Tánya. She's in her bedroom, but please come up.

[DOCTOR *goes upstairs.*

[THEODORE IVÁNITCH *enters with a newspaper in his hand.*

Theodore Iványitch (*to* PORTER). What is it you want?

Porter. I'm from Bourdey's. I brought a dress and a note, and was told to wait.

Theodore Iványitch. Ah, from Bourdey's! (*To* TÁNYA.) Who came in just now?

Tánya. It was Sergéy Iványitch Sahátof and the Doctor. They stood talking here a bit. It was all about spiritalism.

Theodore Iványitch (*correcting her*). Spiritualism.

Tánya. Yes, that's just what I said—spiritalism. Have you heard how well it went off last time, Theodore Iván-

itch? (*Laughs*). There was knocks, and things flew about!

Theodore Ivánitch. And how do *you* know?

Tánya. Miss Elizabeth told me.

[JACOB *runs in with a tumbler of tea on a tray.*

Jacob (*to the* PORTER). Good morning!

Porter (*disconsolately*). Good morning!

[JACOB *knocks at* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *door.*

[GREGORY *enters.*

Gregory. Give it here.

Jacob. You didn't bring back all yesterday's tumblers, nor the tray Vasíly Leoníditch had. And it's me that have to answer for them!

Gregory. The tray is full of cigars.

Jacob. Well, put them somewhere else. It's me who's answerable for it.

Gregory. I'll bring it back! I'll bring it back!

Jacob. Yes, so you say, but it is not where it ought to be. The other day, just as the tea had to be served, it was not to be found.

Gregory. I'll bring it back, I tell you. What a fuss!

Jacob. It's easy for you to talk. Here am I serving tea for the third time, and now there's the lunch to get ready. One does nothing but rush about the livelong day. Is there any one in the house who has more to do than me? Yet they are never satisfied with me.

Gregory. Dear me! Who could wish for any one more satisfactory? You're such a fine fellow!

Tánya. Nobody is good enough for you! You alone . . .

Gregory (*to* TÁNYA). No one asked your opinion!

[*Exit.*

Jacob. Ah, well, I don't mind. Tatyána Márkovna, did the mistress say anything about yesterday?

Tánya. About the lamp, you mean?

Jacob. And how it managed to drop out of my hands, the Lord only knows! Just as I began rubbing it, and was going to take hold of it in another place. out it slips and goes all to pieces. It's just my luck! It's easy for

that Gregory Miháylitch to talk—a single man like him! But when one has a family, one has to consider things: they have to be fed. I don't mind work. . . . So she didn't say anything? The Lord be thanked! . . . Oh, Theodore Ivánitch, have you one spoon or two?

Theodore Ivánitch. One. Only one!

[*Reads newspaper.*

[*Exit* JACOB.

[*Bell rings. Enter* GREGORY (*carrying a tray*) *and the* DOORKEEPER.

Doorkeeper (*to* GREGORY). Tell the master some peasants have come from the village.

Gregory (*pointing to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). Tell the major-domo here, it's his business. I have no time.

[*Exit.*

Tánya. Where are these peasants from?

Doorkeeper. From Koursk, I think.

Tánya. (*shrieks with delight*). It's them. . . . It's Simon's father come about the land! I'll go and meet them!

[*Runs off.*

Doorkeeper. Well, then, what shall I say to them? Shall they come in here? They say they've come about the land—the master knows, they say.

Theodore Ivánitch. Yes, they want to purchase some land. All right! But he has a visitor now, so you had better tell them to wait.

Doorkeeper. Where shall they wait?

Theodore Ivánitch. Let them wait outside. I'll send for them when the time comes.

[*Exit* DOORKEEPER.

[*Enter* TÁNYA, *followed by three* PEASANTS.

Tánya. To the right. In here! In here!

Theodore Ivánitch. I did not want them brought in here!

Gregory. Forward minx!

Tánya. Oh, Theodore Ivánitch, it won't matter, they'll stand in this corner.

Theodore Ivánitch. They'll dirty the floor.

Tánya. They've scraped their shoes, and I'll wipe the

floor up afterwards. (*To* PEASANTS.) Here, stand just here.

[PEASANTS *come forward, carrying presents tied in cotton handkerchiefs: cake, eggs and embroidered towels. They look around for an icón before which to cross themselves; not finding one, they cross themselves, looking at the staircase.*

Gregory (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). There now, Theodore Iványitch, they say Pironnet's boots are an elegant shape. But those there are ever so much better.

[*Pointing to the third* PEASANT'S *bast shoes.*

Theodore Iványitch. Why will you always be ridiculing people?

[*Exit* GREGORY.

Theodore Iványitch (*rises and goes up to the* PEASANTS). So you are from Koursk? And have come to arrange about buying some land?

First Peasant. Just so. We might say, it is for the completion of the purchase of the land we have come. How could we announce ourselves to the master?

Theodore Iványitch. Yes, yes, I know. You wait a bit and I'll go and inform him.

[*Exit.*

[*The* PEASANTS *look around; they are embarrassed where to put their presents.*

First Peasant. There now, couldn't we have what d'you call it? Something to present these here things on? To do it in a genteel way, like,—a little dish or something.

Tánya. All right, directly; put them down here for the present.

[*Puts bundles on settle.*

First Peasant. There now,—that respectable gentleman that was here just now,—what might be his station?

Tánya. He's the master's valet.

First Peasant. I see. So he's also in service. And you, now, are you a servant too?

Tánya. I am lady's-maid. Do you know, I also come from Démen! I know you, and you, but I don't know him.

[*Pointing to third* PEASANT.

Third Peasant. Them two you know, but me you don't know?

Tánya. You are Efím Antónitch.

First Peasant. That's just it!

Tánya. And you are Simon's father, Zachary Trifánitch.

Second Peasant. Right!

Third Peasant. And let me tell you, I'm Mítry Vlásitch Tchilíkin. Now do you know?

Tánya. Now I shall know you too!

Second Peasant. And who may you be?

Tánya. I am Aksínya's, the soldier's wife's, orphan.

First and Third Peasants (*with surprise*). Never!

Second Peasant. The proverb says true:

> "Buy a penny pig, put it in the rye,
> And you'll have a wonderful fat porker by-and-by."

First Peasant. That's just it! She's got the resemblance of a duchess!

Third Peasant. That be so truly. Oh Lord!

Vasíly Leoníditch (*off the scene, rings, and then shouts*). Gregory! Gregory!

First Peasant. Now who's that, for example, disturbing himself in such a way, if I may say so?

Tánya. That's the young master.

Third Peasant. Oh Lord! Didn't I say we'd better wait outside until the time comes?

[*Silence.*

Second Peasant. Is it *you,* Simon wants to marry?

Tánya. Why, has he been writing?

[*Hides her face in her apron.*

Second Peasant. It's evident he's written! But it's a bad business he's imagined here. I see the lad's got spoilt!

Tánya (*quickly*). No, he's not at all spoilt! Shall I send him to you?

Second Peasant. Why send him? All in good time. Where's the hurry?

Vasíly Leoníditch (*desperately, behind scene*). Gregory! Where the devil are you? . . .

[*Enters from his room in shirt-sleeves, adjusting his pince-nez.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Is every one dead?

Tánya. He's not here, sir. . . . I'll send him to you at once.

[*Moves towards the back door.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. I could hear you talking, you know. How have these scarecrows sprung up here? Eh? What?

Tánya. They're peasants from the Koursk village, sir.

[PEASANTS *bow.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. And who is this? Oh yes, from Bourdier.

[VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *pays no attention to the* PEASANTS' *bow.* TÁNYA *meets* GREGORY *at the doorway and remains on the scene.*

Vasíly Leoníditch (*to* GREGORY). I told you the other boots. . . . I can't wear these!

Gregory. Well, the others are also there.

Vasíly Leoníditch. But where is *there?*

Gregory. Just in the same place!

Vasíly Leoníditch. They're not!

Gregory. Well, come and see.

[*Exeunt* GREGORY *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH.

Third Peasant. Say, now, might we not in the meantime just go and wait, say, in some lodging-house or somewhere?

Tánya. No, no, wait a little. I'll go and bring you some plates to put the presents on.

[*Exit.*

[*Enter* SAHÁTOF *and* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH, *followed by* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

[*The* PEASANTS *take up the presents, and pose themselves.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch (*to* PEASANTS). Presently, presently! Wait a bit! (*Points to* PORTER.) Who is this?

Porter. From Bourdey's.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Ah, from Bourdier.

Sahátof (*smiling*). Well, I don't deny it: still you understand that, never having seen it, we, the uninitiated, have some difficulty in believing.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. You say you find it difficult to be-

lieve! We do not ask for faith; all we demand of you is to investigate! How can I help believing in this ring? Yet this ring came from there!

Sahátof. From *there?* What do you mean? From where?

Leonid Fyódoritch. From the other world. Yes!

Sahátof (*smiling*). That's very interesting—very interesting!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, supposing we admit that I'm a man carried away by an idea, as you think, and that I am deluding myself. Well, but what of Alexéy Vladímiritch Krougosvétlof—he is not just an ordinary man, but a distinguished professor, and yet he admits it to be a fact. And not he alone. What of Crookes? What of Wallace?

Sahátof. But I don't deny anything. I only say it is very interesting. It would be interesting to know how Krougosvétlof explains it!

Leonid Fyódoritch. He has a theory of his own. Could you come to-night?—he is sure to be here. First we shall have Grossman—you know, the famous thought-reader?

Sahátof. Yes, I have heard of him but have never happened to meet him.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Then you must come! We shall first have Grossman, then Kaptchítch, and our mediumistic séance. . . . (*To* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.) Has the man returned from Kaptchítch?

Theodore Ivánitch. Not yet, sir.

Sahátof. Then how am I to know?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Never mind, come in any case! If Kaptchítch can't come we shall find our own medium. Márya Ignátievna is a medium—not such a good one as Kaptchítch, but still . . .

[TÁNYA *enters with plates for the presents, and stands listening.*

Sahátof (*smiling*). Oh, yes, yes. But here is one puzzling point:—how is it that the mediums are always of the, so-called, educated class, such as Kaptchítch and Márya Ignátievna? If there were such a special force, would it not be met with also among the common people—the peasants?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Oh yes, and it is! That is very common. Even here in our own house we have a peasant whom we discovered to be a medium. A few days ago we called him in—a sofa had to be moved, during a séance—and we forgot all about him. In all probability he fell asleep. And, fancy, after our séance was over and Kaptchítch had come to again, we suddenly noticed mediumistic phenomena in another part of the room, near the peasant: the table gave a jerk and moved!

Tánya (*aside*). That was when I was getting out from under it!

Leonid Fyódoritch. It is quite evident he also is a medium. Especially as he is very like Home in appearance. You remember Home—a fair-haired naïf sort of fellow?

Sahátof (*shrugging his shoulders*). Dear me, this is very interesting, you know. I think you should try him.

Leonid Fyódoritch. So we will! And he is not alone; there are thousands of mediums, only we do not know them. Why, only a short time ago a bedridden old woman moved a brick wall!

Sahátof. Moved a brick . . . a brick wall?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, yes. She was lying in bed, and did not even know she was a medium. She just leant her arm against the wall, and the wall moved!

Sahátof. And did not cave in?

Leonid Fyódoritch. And did not cave in.

Sahátof. Very strange! Well, then, I'll come this evening.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Pray, do. We shall have a séance in any case.

[SAHÁTOF *puts on his outdoor things;* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *sees him to the door.*

Porter (*to* TÁNYA). Do tell your mistress! Am I to spend the night here?

Tánya. Wait a little; she's going to drive out with the young lady, so she'll soon be coming downstairs.

[*Exit.*

Leonid Fyódoritch (*comes up to the* PEASANTS, *who bow and offer him their presents*). That's not necessary!

First Peasant (*smiling*). Oh, but this-here is our first

duty, it is! It's also the Commune's orders that we should do it!

Second Peasant. That's always been the proper way.

Third Peasant. Say no more about it! 'Cause as we are much satisfied. . . . As our parents, let's say, served, let's say, your parents, so we would like the same with all our hearts . . . and not just anyhow!

[*Bows.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. But what is it about? What do you want?

First Peasant. It's to your honor we've come . . .

[*Enter* Petrístchef *briskly, in fur-lined overcoat.*

Petristchef. Is Vasíly Leoníditch awake yet?

[*Seeing* Leoníd Fyódoritch, *bows, moving only his head.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. You have come to see my son?

Petristchef. I? Yes, just to see Vovo for a moment.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Step in, step in.

[Petrístchef *takes off his overcoat and walks in briskly. Exit.*

Leonid Fyódoritch (*to* Peasants). Well, what is it you want?

Second Peasant. Please accept our presents!

First Peasant (*smiling*). That's to say, the peasants' offerings.

Third Peasant. Say no more about it; what's the good? We wish you the same as if you were our own father! Say no more about it!

Leonid Fyódoritch. All right. Here, Theodore, take these.

Theodore Ivánitch (*to* Peasants). Give them here.

[*Takes the presents.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, what is the business?

First Peasant. We've come to your honor . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. I see you have; but what do you want?

First Peasant. It's about making a move towards completing the sale of the land. It comes to this . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Do you mean to buy the land?

First Peasant. That's just it. It comes to this . . . I

mean the buying of the property of the land. The Commune has given us, let's say, the power of atturning, to enter, let's say, as is lawful, through the Government bank, with a stamp for the lawful amount.

Leonid Fyódoritch. You mean that you want to buy the land through the land-bank.

First Peasant. That's just it. Just as you offered it to us last year. It comes to this, then, the whole sum in full for the buying of the property of the land is 32,864 roubles.

Leonid Fyódoritch. That's all right, but how about paying up?

First Peasant. As to the payment, the Commune offers just as it was said last year—to pay in 'stalments, and your receipt of the ready money by lawful regulations, 4000 roubles in full.[1]

Second Peasant. Take 4000 now, and wait for the rest of the money.

Third Peasant (*unwrapping a parcel of money*). And about this be quite easy. We should pawn our own selves rather than do such a thing just anyhow say, but in this way, let's say, as it ought to be done.

Leonid Fyódoritch. But did I not write and tell you that I should not agree to it unless you brought the whole sum?

First Peasant. That's just it. It would be more agreeable, but it is not in our possibilities, I mean.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well then, the thing can't be done!

First Peasant. The Commune, for example, relied its hopes on that, that you made the offer last year to sell it in easy 'stalments . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. That was last year. I would have agreed to it then, but now I can't.

Second Peasant. But how's that? We've been depending on your promise—we've got the papers ready and have collected the money!

Third Peasant. Be merciful, master! We're short of land; we'll say nothing about cattle, but even a hen, let's

[1] The present value of the rouble is rather over fifty cents.

say, we've no room to keep. (*Bows.*) Don't wrong us, master!

[*Bows.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Of course it's quite true, that I agreed last year to let you have the land for payment by instalments, but now circumstances are such that it would be inconvenient.

Second Peasant. Without this land we cannot live!

First Peasant. That's just it. Without land our lives must grow weaker and come to a decline.

Third Peasant (*bowing*). Master, we have so little land, let's not talk about the cattle, but even a chicken, let's say, we've no room for. Master, be merciful, accept the money, master!

Leonid Fyódoritch (*examining the document*). I quite understand, and should like to help you. Wait a little; I will give you an answer in half-an-hour. . . . Theodore, say I am engaged and am not to be disturbed.

Theodore Ivánitch. Yes, sir.

[*Exit* Leonid Fyódoritch.

[*The* Peasants *look dejected.*

Second Peasant. Here's a go! "Give me the whole sum," he says. And where are we to get it from?

First Peasant. If he had not given us hopes, for example. As it is we felt quite insured it would be as was said last year.

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord! and I had begun unwrapping the money. (*Begins wrapping up the bundle of bank-notes again.*) What are we to do now?

Theodore Ivánitch. What is your business, then?

First Peasant. Our business, respected sir, depends in this. Last year he made us the offer of our buying the land in 'stalments. The Commune entered upon these terms and gave us the powers of atturning, and now d'you see he makes the offering that we should pay the whole in full! And as it turns out, the business is no ways convenient for us.

Theodore Ivánitch. What is the whole sum?

First Peasant. The whole sum in readiness is 4000 roubles, you see.

Theodore Iványitch. Well, what of that? Make an effort and collect more.

First Peasant. Such as it is, it was collected with much effort. We have, so to say, in this sense, not got ammunition enough.

Second Peasant. You can't get blood out of a stone.

Third Peasant. We'd be glad with all our hearts, but we have swept even this together, as you might say, with a broom.

[VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *and* PETRÍSTCHEF *appear in the doorway both smoking cigarettes.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. I have told you already I'll do my best, so, of course, I will do all that is possible! Eh, what?

Petrístchef. You must just understand that if you do not get it, the devil only knows what a mess we shall be in!

Vasíly Leoníditch. But I've already said I'll do my best, and so I will. Eh, what?

Petrístchef. Nothing. I only say, get some at any cost; I will wait.

[*Exit into* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *room, closing door.*

Vasíly Leoníditch (*waving his arm*). It's a deuce of a go!

[*The* PEASANTS *bow.*

Vasíly Leoníditch (*looking at* PORTER, *to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). Why don't you attend to this fellow from Bourdier? He hasn't come to take lodgings with us, has he? Just look, he is asleep! Eh, what?

Theodore Iványitch. The note he brought has been sent in, and he has been told to wait until Anna Pávlovna comes down.

Vasíly Leoníditch (*looks at* PEASANTS *and notices the money*). And what is this? Money? For whom? Is it for us? (*To* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.) Who are they?

Theodore Iványitch. They are peasants from Koursk. They are buying land.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Has it been sold them?

Theodore Iványitch. No, they have not yet come to any agreement. They are too stingy?

Vasíly Leoníditch. Eh? Well, we must try and persuade them. (*To the* PEASANTS.) Here, I say, are you buying land? Eh?

First Peasant. That's just it. We have made an offering as how we should like to acquire the possession of the land.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Then you should not be so stingy, you know. Just let me tell you how necessary land is to peasants! Eh, what? It's very necessary, isn't it?

First Peasant. That's just it. The land appears as the very first and foremost necessity to a peasant. That's just it.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Then why be so stingy? Just you think what land is! Why, one can sow wheat on it in rows! I tell you, you could get eighty bushels of wheat, at a rouble and a half a bushel—that would be 120 roubles. Eh, what? Or else mint! I tell you, you could collar 400 roubles off an acre by sowing mint!

First Peasant. That's just it. All sorts of producks one could put into action if one had the right understanding.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Mint! Decidedly mint! I have learnt about it, you know. It's all printed in books. I can show them you. Eh, what?

First Peasant. That's just it, all concerns are clearer to you through your books. That's learnedness, of course.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Then pay up and don't be stingy! (*To* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.) Where's papa?

Theodore Iványitch. He gave orders not to be disturbed just now.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Oh, I suppose he's consulting a spirit whether to sell the land or not? Eh, what?

Theodore Iványitch. I can't say. All I know is that he went away undecided about it.

Vasíly Leoníditch. What d'you think, Theodore Ivánitch, is he flush of cash? Eh, what?

Theodore Iványitch. I don't know. I hardly think so. But what does it matter to you? You drew a good sum not more than a week ago.

Vasíly Leoníditch. But didn't I pay for those dogs? And now, you know, there's our new Society, and Petríst-

chef has been chosen, and I had borrowed money from Petrístchef and must pay the subscription both for him and for myself. Eh, what?

Theodore Iványitch. And what is this new Society? A Cycling Club?

Vasíly Leoníditch. No. Just let me tell you. It is quite a new Society. It is a very serious Society, you know. And who do you think is President? Eh, what?

Theodore Iványitch. What's the object of this new Society?

Vasíly Leoníditch. It is a "Society to Promote the Breeding of Pure-Bred Russian Hounds." Eh, what? And I'll tell you, they're having the first meeting and a lunch, to-day. And I've no money. I'll go to him and have a try!

[*Exit through study door.*

First Peasant (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). And who might he be, respected sir?

Theodore Iványitch (*smiles*). The young master.

Third Peasant. The heir, so to say. Oh, Lord! (*Puts away the money.*) I'd better hide it meanwhile.

First Peasant. And we were told he was in military service, in the cav'rely, for example.

Theodore Iványitch. No, as an only son he is exempt from military service.

Third Peasant. Left for to keep his parents, so to say! That's right!

Second Peasant (*shaking his head*). He's the right sort. He'll feed them finely!

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

[*Enter* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH, *followed by* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH.

Vasíly Leoníditch. That's always the way. It's really surprising! First I'm asked why I have no occupation, and now when I have found a field and am occupied, when a Society with serious and noble aims has been founded, I can't even have 300 roubles to go on with! . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. I tell you I can't do it, and I can't! I haven't got it.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Why, you have just sold some land.

Leonid Fyódoritch. In the first place I have not sold it! And above all, do leave me in peace! Weren't you told I was engaged?

[*Exit, slamming door.*

Theodore Iványitch. I told you this was not the right moment.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Well, I say! Here's a position to be in! I'll go and see mamma—that's my only hope. He's going crazy over his spiritualism and forgets everything else.

[*Goes upstairs.*

[THEODORE IVÁNITCH *takes newspaper and is just going to sit down, when* BETSY and MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA, *followed by* GREGORY, *come down the stairs.*

Betsy. Is the carriage ready?

Gregory. Just coming to the door.

Betsy (*to* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA). Come along, come along, I know it is he.

Márya Konstantínovna. Which he?

Betsy. You know very well whom I mean—Petrístchef, of course.

Márya Konstantínovna. But where is he?

Betsy. Sitting in Vovo's room. You'll see!

Márya Konstantínovna. And suppose it is not he?

[*The* PEASANTS *and* PORTER *bow.*

Betsy (*to* PORTER). You brought a dress from Bourdier's?

Porter. Yes, Miss. May I go?

Betsy. Well, I don't know. Ask my mother.

Porter. I don't know whose it is, Miss; I was ordered to bring it here and receive the money.

Betsy. Well, then, wait.

Márya Konstantínovna. Is it still that costume for the charade?

Betsy. Yes, a charming costume. But mamma won't take it or pay for it.

Márya Konstantínovna. But why not?

Betsy. You'd better ask mamma. She doesn't grudge Vovo 500 roubles for his dogs, but 100 is too much for a

dress. I can't act dressed like a scarecrow. (*Pointing to* PEASANTS.) And who are these?

Gregory. Peasants who have come to buy some land or other.

Betsy. And I thought they were the beaters. Are you not beaters?

First Peasant. No, no, lady. We have come to see Leoníd Fyódoritch about the signing into our possession of the title-deeds to some land.

Betsy. Then how is it? Vovo was expecting some beaters who were to come to-day. Are you sure you are not the beaters? (*The* PEASANTS *are silent*.) How stupid they are! (*Goes to* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *door*.) Vovo?

[*Laughs*.

Márya Konstantínovna. But we met him just now upstairs!

Betsy. Why need you remember that? Vovo, are you there?

[PETRÍSTCHEF *enters*.

Petrístchef. Vovo is not here, but I am prepared to fulfil on his behalf anything that may be required. How do you do? How do you do, Márya Konstantínovna?

[*Shakes hands long and violently with* BETSY, *and then with* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA.

Second Peasant. See, it's as if he were pumping water!

Betsy. You can't replace him,—still you're better than nobody. (*Laughs*.) What are these affairs of yours with Vovo?

Petrístchef. What affairs? Our affairs are fie-nancial, that is, our business is fie! It's also nancial, and besides it is financial.

Betsy. What does nancial mean?

Petrístchef. What a question! It means nothing, that's just the point.

Betsy. No, no, you have missed fire.

[*Laughs*.

Petrístchef. One can't always hit the mark, you know. It's something like a lottery. Blanks and blanks again, and at last you win!

[THEODORE IVÁNITCH *goes into the study*.

Betsy. Well, this was blank then; but tell me, were you at the Mergásofs' last night?

Petrístchef. Not exactly at the *Mère* Gásof's, but rather at the *Père* Gásof's, or better still, at the *Fils* Gásof's.

Betsy. You can't do without puns. It's an illness. And were the Gypsies there? [1]

[*Laughs*.

Petrístchef (*sings*). "On their aprons silken threads, little birds with golden heads!" . . .

Betsy. Happy mortals! And we were yawning at Fofo's.

Petrístchef (*continues to sing*). "And she promised and she swore, she would ope' her . . . her . . . her . . ." how does it go on, Márya Konstantínovna?

Márya Konstantínovna. "Closet door."

Petrístchef. How? What? How, Márya Konstantínovna?

Betsy. *Cessez, vous devenez impossible!* [2]

Petrístchef. *J'ai cessé, j'ai bébé, j'ai dédé . . .* [3]

Betsy. I see the only way to rid ourselves of your wit is to make you sing! Let us go into Vovo's room, his guitar is there. Come, Márya Konstantínovna, come!

[*Exeunt* BETSY, MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA, *and* PETRÍSTCHEF.

First Peasant. Who be they?

Gregory. One is our young lady, the other is a girl who teaches her music.

First Peasant. Administrates learning, so to say. And ain't she smart? A reg'lar picture!

Second Peasant. Why don't they marry her? She is old enough, I should say.

Gregory. Do you think it's the same as among you peasants,—marry at fifteen?

First Peasant. And that man, for example, is he also in the musitional line?

Gregory (*mimicking him*). "Musitional," indeed! You don't understand anything!

[1] The Gypsy choirs are very popular in Moscow.

[2] *Betsy*. Cease! You are becoming quite unbearable!

[3] *Petrístchef*. I have C said (*ceased*), B said, and D said.

First Peasant. That's just so. And stupidity, one might say, is our ignorance.

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

[*Gypsy songs and guitar accompaniment are heard from* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *room.*

[*Enter* SIMON, *followed by* TÁNYA, *who watches the meeting between father and son.*

Gregory (*to* SIMON). What do you want?

Simon. I have been to Mr. Kaptchítch.

Gregory. Well, and what's the answer?

Simon. He sent word he couldn't possibly come to-night.

Gregory. All right, I'll let them know.

[*Exit.*

Simon (*to his father*). How d'you do, father! My respects to Daddy Efím and Daddy Mítry! How are all at home?

Second Peasant. Very well, Simon.

First Peasant. How d'you do, lad?

Third Peasant. How d'you do, sonny?

Simon (*smiles*). Well, come along, father, and have some tea.

Second Peasant. Wait till we've finished our business. Don't you see we are not ready yet?

Simon. Well, I'll wait for you by the porch.

[*Wishes to go away.*

Tánya (*running after him*). I say, why didn't you tell him anything?

Simon. How could I before all those people? Give me time, I'll tell him over our tea.

[*Exit.*

[THEODORE IVÁNITCH *enters and sits down by the window.*

First Peasant. Respected sir, how's our business proceeding?

Theodore Iványitch. Wait a bit, he'll be out presently, he's just finishing.

Tánya (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). And how do you know, Theodore Iványitch, he is finishing?

Theodore Iványitch. I know that when he has finished questioning, he reads the question and answer aloud.

Tánya. Can one really talk with spirits by means of a saucer?

Theodore Iványitch. It seems so.

Tánya. But supposing they tell him to sign, will he sign?

Theodore Iványitch. Of course he will.

Tánya. But they do not speak with words?

Theodore Iványitch. Oh, yes. By means of the alphabet. He notices at which letter the saucer stops.

Tánya. Yes, but at a si-ance? . . .

[*Enter* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, friends, I can't do it! I should be very glad to, but it is quite impossible. If it were for ready money it would be a different matter.

First Peasant. That's just so. What more could any one desire? But the people are so inpennycuous—it is quite impossible!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, I can't do it, I really can't. Here is your document; I can't sign it.

Third Peasant. Show some pity, master; be merciful!

Second Peasant. How can you act so? It is doing us a wrong.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Nothing wrong about it, friends. I offered it you in summer, but then you did not agree; and now I can't agree to it.

Third Peasant. Master, be merciful! How are we to get along? We have so little land. We'll say nothing about the cattle; a hen, let's say, there's no room to let a hen run about.

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *goes up to the door and stops. Enter, descending the staircase,* ANNA PÁVLOVNA *and* DOCTOR, *followed by* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH, *who is in a merry and playful mood and is putting some bank-notes into his purse.*

Anna Pávlovna (*tightly laced, and wearing a bonnet*). Then I am to take it?

Doctor. If the symptoms recur you must certainly take it, but above all, you must behave better. How can you

expect thick syrup to pass through a thin little hair tube, especially when we squeeze the tube? It's impossible; and so it is with the biliary duct. It's simple enough.

Anna Pávlovna. All right, all right!

Doctor. Yes. "All right, all right," and you go on in the same old way. It won't do, madam—it won't do. Well, good-bye!

Anna Pávlovna. No, not good-bye, only *au revoir!* For I still expect you to-night. I shall not be able to make up my mind without you.

Doctor. All right, if I have time I'll pop in.

[*Exit.*

Anna Pávlovna (*noticing the* PEASANTS). What's this? What? What people are these?

[PEASANTS *bow.*

Theodore Iványitch. These are peasants from Koursk, come to see Leoníd Fyódoritch about the sale of some land.

Anna Pávlovna. I see they are peasants, but who let them in?

Theodore Iványitch. Leoníd Fyódoritch gave the order. He has just been speaking to them about the sale of the land.

Anna Pávlovna. What sale? There is no need to sell any. But above all, how can one let in people from the street into the house? One can't let people in from the street! One can't let people into the house who have spent the night heaven knows where! . . . (*Getting more and more excited.*) I daresay every fold of their clothes is full of microbes—of scarlet-fever microbes, of smallpox microbes, of diphtheria microbes! Why, they are from Koursk Government, where there is an epidemic of diphtheria . . . Doctor! Doctor! Call the doctor back!

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *goes into his room and shuts the door.* GREGORY *goes to recall the* DOCTOR.

Vasíly Leoníditch (*smokes at the* PEASANTS). Never mind, mamma; if you like I'll fumigate them so that all the microbes will go to pot! Eh, what?

[ANNA PÁVLOVNA *remains severely silent, awaiting the* DOCTOR'S *return.*

Vasíly Leoníditch (*to* PEASANTS). And do you fatten pigs? There's a first-rate business!

First Peasant. That's just so. We do go in for the pig-fattening line now and then.

Vasíly Leoníditch. This kind? . . .

[*Grunts like a pig.*

Anna Pávlovna. Vovo, Vovo, leave off!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Isn't it like? Eh, what?

First Peasant. That's just so. It's very resemblant.

Anna Pávlovna. Vovo, leave off, I tell you!

Second Peasant. What's it all about?

Third Peasant. I said, we'd better go to some lodging meanwhile!

[*Enter* DOCTOR *and* GREGORY.

Doctor. What's the matter? What's happened?

Anna Pávlovna. Why, you're always saying I must not get excited. Now, how is it possible to keep calm? I do not see my own sister for two months, and am careful about any doubtful visitor—and here are people from Koursk, straight from Koursk, where there is an epidemic of diphtheria, right in my house!

Doctor. These good fellows you mean, I suppose?

Anna Pávlovna. Of course. Straight from a diphtheric place!

Doctor. Well, of course, if they come from an infected place it is rash; but still there is no reason to excite yourself so much about it.

Anna Pávlovna. But don't you yourself advise carefulness?

Doctor. Of course, of course. Still, why excite yourself?

Anna Pávlovna. How can I help it? Now we shall have to have the house completely disinfected.

Doctor. Oh, no! Why completely? That would cost 300 roubles or more. I'll arrange it cheaply and well for you. Take, to a large bottle of water . . .

Anna Pávlovna. Boiled?

Doctor. It's all the same. Boiled would be better. To one bottle of water take a tablespoon of salicylic acid, and have everything they have come in contact with washed

with the solution. As to the fellows themselves, they must be off, of course. That's all. Then you're quite safe. And it would do no harm to sprinkle some of the same solution through a spray—two or three tumblers—you'll see how well it will act. No danger whatever.

Anna Pávlovna. Tánya! Where is Tánya?

[*Enter* TÁNYA.

Tánya. Did you call, M'm?

Anna Pávlovna. You know that big bottle in my dressing-room?

Tánya. Out of which we sprinkled the laundress yesterday?

Anna Pávlovna. Well, of course! What other bottle could I mean? Well, then, take that bottle and first wash with soap the place where they have been standing, and then with . . .

Tánya. Yes, M'm; I know how.

Anna Pávlovna. And then take the spray . . . However, I had better do that myself when I get back.

Doctor. Well, then, do so, and don't be afraid! Well, *au revoir* till this evening.

[*Exit.*

Anna Pávlovna. And they must be off! Not a trace of them must remain! Get out, get out! Go—what are you looking at?

First Peasant. That's just so. It's because of our stupidity, as we were instructed . . .

Gregory (*pushes the* PEASANTS *out*). There, there; be off!

Second Peasant. Let me have my handkerchief back!

[*The handkerchief in which the presents were wrapped.*

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord, oh, Lord! didn't I say—some lodging-house meanwhile!

[GREGORY *pushes him out. Exeunt* PEASANTS.

Porter (*who has repeatedly tried to say something*). Will there be any answer?

Anna Pávlovna. Ah, from Bourdier? (*Excitedly.*) None! None! You can take it back. I told her I never

ordered such a costume, and I will not allow my daughter to wear it!

Porter. I know nothing about it. I was sent . . .

Anna Pávlovna. Go, go, take it back! I will call myself about it!

Vasíly Leoníditch (*solemnly*). Sir Messenger from Bourdier, depart!

Porter. I might have been told that long ago. I have sat here nearly five hours!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Ambassador from Bourdier, begone!

Anna Pávlovna. Cease, please!

[*Exit* PORTER.

Anna Pávlovna. Betsy! Where is she? I always have to wait for her.

Vasíly Leoníditch (*shouting at the top of his voice*). Betsy! Petrístchef! Come quick, quick, quick! Eh? What?

[*Enter* PETRÍSTCHEF, BETSY, *and* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA.

Anna Pávlovna. You always keep one waiting!

Betsy. On the contrary, I was waiting for you!

[PETRÍSTCHEF *bows with his head only, then kisses* ANNA PÁVLOVNA'S *hand.*

Anna Pávlovna. How d'you do! (*To* BETSY.) You always have an answer ready!

Betsy. If you are upset, mamma, I had better not go.

Anna Pávlovna. Are we going or not?

Betsy. Well, let us go; it can't be helped.

Anna Pávlovna. Did you see the man from Bourdier?

Betsy. Yes, and I was very glad. I ordered the costume, and am going to wear it when it is paid for.

Anna Pávlovna. I am not going to pay for a costume that is indecent!

Betsy. Why has it become indecent? First it was decent, and now you have a fit of prudery.

Anna Pávlovna. Not prudery at all! If the bodice were completely altered, then it would do.

Betsy. Mamma, that is quite impossible.

Anna Pávlovna. Well, get dressed.

[*They sit down.* GREGORY *puts on their over-shoes for them.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Márya Konstantínovna, do you notice a vacuum in the hall?

Márya Konstantínovna. What is it?

[*Laughs in anticipation.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Bourdier's man has gone! Eh, what? Good, eh?

[*Laughs loudly.*

Anna Pávlovna. Well, let us go. (*Goes out of the door, but returns at once.*) Tánya!

Tánya. Yes, M'm?

Anna Pávlovna. Don't let Frisk catch cold while I am away. If she wants to be let out, put on her little yellow cloak. She is not quite well to-day.

Tánya. Yes, M'm.

[*Exeunt* ANNA PÁVLOVNA, BETSY, *and* GREGORY.

Petrístchef. Well, have you got it?

Vasíly Leoníditch. Not without trouble, I can tell you! First I rushed at the gov'nor; he began to bellow and turned me out. Off to the mater—I got it out of her. It's here! (*Slaps his breast pocket.*) If once I make up my mind, there's no getting away from me. I have a deadly grip! Eh, what? And d'you know, my wolf-hounds are coming to-day.

[PETRÍSTCHEF *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *put on their outdoor things and go out.* TÁNYA *follows.*

Theodore Ivánitch (*alone*). Yes, nothing but unpleasantness. How is it they can't live in peace? But one must say the new generation are not—the thing. And as to the women's dominion! . . . Why, Leoníd Fyódoritch just now was going to put in a word, but seeing what a frenzy she was in—slammed the door behind him. He is a wonderfully kind-hearted man. Yes, wonderfully kind. What's this? Here's Tánya bringing them back again!

Tánya. Come in, come in, grand-dads, never mind!

[*Enter* TÁNYA *and the* PEASANTS.

Theodore Ivánitch. Why have you brought them back?

Tánya. Well, Theodore Ivánitch, we must do something

about their business. I shall have to wash the place anyhow.

Theodore Iványitch. But the business will not come off, I see that already.

First Peasant. How could we best put our affair into action, respected sir? Your reverence might take a little trouble over it, and we should give you full thankings from the Commune for your trouble.

Third Peasant. Do try, honey! We can't live! We have so little land. Talk of cattle—why, we have no room to keep a hen!

[*They bow.*

Theodore Iványitch. I am sorry for you, friends, but I can't think of any way to help you. I understand your case very well, but he has refused. So what can one do? Besides, the lady is also against it. Well, give me your papers—I'll try and see what I can do, but I hardly hope to succeed.

[*Exit.*

[TÁNYA *and the three* PEASANTS *sigh.*

Tánya. But tell me, grand-dads, what is it that is wanted?

First Peasant. Why, only that he should put his signature to our document.

Tánya. That the master should sign? Is that all?

First Peasant. Yes, only lay his signature on the deed and take the money, and there would be an end of the matter.

Third Peasant. He only has to write and sign, as the peasants, let's say, desire, so, let's say, I also desire. That's the whole affair—if he'd only take it and sign it, it's all done.

Tánya (*considering*). He need only sign the paper and it's done?

First Peasant. That's just so. The whole matter is in dependence on that, and nothing else. Let him sign, and we ask no more.

Tánya. Just wait and see what Theodore Iványitch will say. If he cannot persuade the master, I'll try something.

First Peasant. Get round him, will you?

Tánya. I'll try.

Third Peasant. Ay, the lass is going to bestir herself. Only get the thing settled, and the Commune will bind itself to keep you all your life. See there, now!

First Peasant. If the affair can be put into action, truly we might put her in a gold frame.

Second Peasant. That goes without saying!

Tánya. I can't promise for certain, but as the saying is: "An attempt is no sin, if you try . . . "

First Peasant. "You may win." That's just so.

[*Enter* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Theodore Iványitch. No, friends, it's no go! He has not done it, and he won't do it. Here, take your document. You may go.

First Peasant (*gives* TÁNYA *the paper*). Then it's on you we pin all our reliance, for example.

Tánya. Yes, yes! You go into the street, and I'll run out to you in a minute and have a word with you.

[*Exeunt* PEASANTS.

Tánya. Theodore Iványitch, dear Theodore Iványitch, ask the master to come out and speak to me for a moment. I have something to say to him.

Theodore Iványitch. What next?

Tánya. I must, Theodore Iványitch. Ask him, do; there's nothing wrong about it, on my sacred word.

Theodore Iványitch. But what do you want with him?

Tánya. That's a little secret. I will tell you later on, only ask him.

Theodore Iványitch (*smiling*). I can't think what you are up to! All right, I'll go and ask him.

[*Exit.*

Tánya. I'll do it! Didn't he say himself that there is that power in Simon? And I know how to manage. No one found me out that time, and now I'll teach Simon what to do. If it doesn't succeed it's no great matter. After all it's not a sin.

[*Enter* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH, *followed by* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Leoníd Fyódoritch (*smiling*). Is this the petitioner? Well, what is your business?

Tánya. It's a little secret, Leoníd Fyódoritch; let me tell it you alone.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. What is it? Theodore, leave us for a minute.

[*Exit* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Tánya. As I have grown up and lived in your house, Leoníd Fyódoritch, and as I am very grateful to you for everything, I shall open my heart to you as to a father. Simon, who is living in your house, wants to marry me.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. So that's it!

Tánya. I open my heart to you as to a father! I have no one to advise me, being an orphan.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Well, and why not? He seems a nice lad.

Tánya. Yes, that's true. He would be all right; there is only one thing I have my doubts about. It's something about him that I have noticed and can't make out . . . perhaps it is something bad.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. What is it? Does he drink?

Tánya. God forbid! But since I know that there is such a thing as spiritalism . . .

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Ah, you know that?

Tánya. Of course! I understand it very well. Some, of course, through ignorance, don't understand it.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Well, what then?

Tánya. I am very much afraid for Simon. It does happen to him.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. What happens to him?

Tánya. Something of a kind like spiritalism. You ask any of the servants. As soon as he gets drowsy at the table, the table begins to tremble, and creak like that: *tuke, . . . tuke!* All the servants have heard it.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Why, it's the very thing I was saying to Sergéy Iványitch this morning! Yes? . . .

Tánya. Or else . . . when was it? . . . Oh, yes, last Wednesday. We sat down to dinner, and the spoon just jumps into his hand of itself!

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Ah, that is interesting! Jumps into his hand? When he was drowsing?

Tánya. That I didn't notice. I think he was, though.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes? . . .

Tánya. And that's what I'm afraid of, and what I wanted to ask you about. May not some harm come of it? To live one's life together, and him having such a thing in him!

Leonid Fyódoritch (*smiling*). No, you need not be afraid, there is nothing bad in that. It only proves him to be a *medium*—simply a medium. I knew him to be a medium before this.

Tánya. So that's what it is! And I was afraid!

Leonid Fyódoritch. No, there's nothing to be afraid of. (*Aside.*) That's capital! Kaptchítch can't come, so we will test him to-night. . . . (*To* TÁNYA.) No, my dear, don't be afraid, he will be a good husband and . . . that is only a kind of special power, and every one has it, only in some it is weaker and in others stronger.

Tánya. Thank you, sir. Now I shan't think any more about it; but I was so frightened. . . . What a thing it is, our want of education!

Leonid Fyódoritch. No, no, don't be frightened . . . Theodore!

[*Enter* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Leonid Fyódoritch. I am going out now. Get everything ready for to-night's séance.

Theodore Iványitch. But Mr. Kaptchítch is not coming.

Leonid Fyódoritch. That does not matter. (*Puts on overcoat.*) We shall have a trial séance with our own medium.

[*Exit.* THEODORE IVÁNITCH *goes out with him.*]

Tánya (*alone*). He believes it! He believes it! (*Shrieks and jumps with joy.*) He really believes it! Isn't it wonderful! (*Shrieks.*) Now I'll do it, if only Simon has pluck for it!

[THEODORE IVÁNITCH *returns.*

Theodore Iványitch. Well, have you told him your secret?

Tánya. I'll tell you, too, only later on. . . . But I have a favor to ask of you, too, Theodore Iványitch.

Theodore Iványitch. Yes? What is it?

Tánya (*shyly*). You have been a second father to me, and I will open my heart before you as before God.

Theodore Iványitch. Don't beat about the bush, but come straight to the point.

Tánya. The point is . . . well, the point is, that Simon wants to marry me.

Theodore Iványitch. Is that it? I thought I noticed . . .

Tánya. Well, why should I hide it? I am an orphan, and you know yourself how matters are in these town establishments. Every one comes bothering; there's that Gregory Mihálitch, for instance, he gives me no peace. And also that other one . . . you know. They think I have no soul, and am only here for their amusement.

Theodore Iványitch. Good girl, that's right! Well, what then?

Tánya. Well, Simon wrote to his father; and he, his father, sees me to-day, and says: "He's spoilt"—he means his son. Theodore Iványitch (*bows*), take the place of a father to me, speak to the old man,—to Simon's father! I could take them into the kitchen, and you might come in and speak to the old man!

Theodore Iványitch (*smiling*). Then I am to turn match-maker—am I? Well, I can do that.

Tánya. Theodore Iványitch, dearest, be a father to me, and I'll pray for you all my life long.

Theodore Iványitch. All right, all right, I'll come later on. Haven't I promised?

[*Takes up newspaper.*

Tánya. You are a second father to me!

Theodore Iványitch. All right, all right.

Tánya. Then I'll rely on you.

[*Exit.*

Theodore Iványitch (*alone, shaking his head*). A good affectionate girl. To think that so many like her perish! Get but once into trouble and she'll go from hand to hand until she sinks into the mire, and can never be found again! There was that dear little Nataly. She, too, was a good girl, reared and cared for by a mother. (*Takes up paper.*) Well, let's see what tricks Ferdinand is up to in Bulgaria.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Evening of the same day. The scene represents the interior of the servants' kitchen. The PEASANTS *have taken off their outer garments and sit drinking tea at the table, and perspiring.* THEODORE IVÁNITCH *is smoking a cigar at the other side of the stage. The discharged* COOK *is lying on the brick oven, and is unseen during the early part of the scene.*

Theodore Iványitch. My advice is, don't hinder him! If it's his wish and hers, in Heaven's name, let him do it. She is a good, honest girl. Never mind her being a bit dressy; she can't help that, living in town: she is a good girl all the same.

Second Peasant. Well, of course, if it is his wish, let him! *He'll* have to live with her, not me. But she's certainly uncommon spruce. How's one to take her into one's hut? Why, she'll not let her mother-in-law so much as pat her on the head.

Theodore Iványitch. That does not depend on the spruceness, but on character. If her nature is good, she's sure to be docile and respectful.

Second Peasant. Ah, well, we'll have her if the lad's bent on having her. After all, it's a bad job to live with one as one don't care for. I'll consult my missus, and then may Heaven bless them!

Theodore Iványitch. Then let's shake hands on it!

Second Peasant. Well, it seems it will have to come off.

First Peasant. Eh, Zachary! fortune's a-smiling on you! You've come to accomplish a piece of business, and just see what a duchess of a daughter-in-law you've obtained. All that's left to be done is to have a drink on it, and then it will be all in order.

Theodore Iványitch. That's not at all necessary.

[*An awkward silence.*

Theodore Iványitch. I know something of your way of life, too, you know. I am even thinking of purchasing a bit of land, building a cottage, and working on the land myself somewhere; maybe in your neighborhood.

Second Peasant. A very good thing, too.

First Peasant. That's just it. When one has got the money one can get all kinds of pleasure in the country.

Third Peasant. Say no more about it! Country life, let's say, is freer in every way, not like the town!

Theodore Iványitch. There now, would you let me join your Commune if I settled among you?

Second Peasant. Why not? If you stand drink for the Elders, they'll accept you soon enough!

First Peasant. And if you open a public-house, for example, or an inn, why, you'd have such a life you'd never need to die! You might live like a king, and no mistake.

Theodore Iványitch. Well, we'll see. I should certainly like to have a few quiet years in my old age. Though my life here is good enough, and I should be sorry to leave. Leoníd Fyódoritch is an exceedingly kind-hearted man.

First Peasant. That's just it. But how about our business? Is it possible that he is going to leave it without any termination?

Theodore Iványitch. He'd do it willingly.

Second Peasant. It seems he's afraid of his wife.

Theodore Iványitch. It's not that he's afraid, but they don't hit things off together.

Third Peasant. But you should try, father! How are we to live else? We've so little land . . .

Theodore Iványitch. We'll see what comes of Tánya's attempt. She's taken the business into her hands now!

Third Peasant (*takes a sip of tea*). Father, be merciful. We've so little land. A hen, let's say, we've no room for a hen, let alone the cattle.

Theodore Iványitch. If the business depended on me. . . . (*To* SECOND PEASANT.) Well, friend, so we've done our bit of match-making! It's agreed then about Tánya?

Second Peasant. I've given my word, and I'll not go back on it without a good reason. If only our business succeeds!

[*Enter* SERVANTS' COOK, *who looks up at the oven, makes a sign, and then begins to speak animatedly to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Servants' Cook. Just now Simon was called upstairs from the front kitchen! The master and that other bald-headed one who calls up spirits with him, ordered him to sit down and take the place of Kaptchítch!

Theodore Iványitch. You don't say so!

Servants' Cook. Yes, Jacob told Tánya.

Theodore Iványitch. Extraordinary!

[*Enter* COACHMAN.

Theodore Iványitch. What do you want?

Coachman (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). You may just tell them I never agreed to live with a lot of dogs! Let any one who likes do it, but I will never agree to live among dogs!

Theodore Iványitch. What dogs?

Coachman. Three dogs have been sent into our room by Vasíly Leoníditch! They've messed it all over. They're whining, and if one comes near them they bite—the devils! They'd tear you to pieces if you didn't mind. I've a good mind to take a club and smash their legs for them!

Theodore Iványitch. But when did they come?

Coachman. Why, to-day, from the Dog Show; the devil knows what kind they are, but they're an expensive sort. Are we or the dogs to live in the coachmen's quarters? You just go and ask!

Theodore Iványitch. Yes, that will never do. I'll go and ask about it.

Coachman. They'd better be brought here to Loukérya.

Servants' Cook (*angrily*). People have to eat here, and you'd like to lock dogs in here! As it is . . .

Coachman. And I've got the liveries, and the sledge-covers and the harness there, and they expect things kept clean! Perhaps the porter's lodge might do.

Theodore Iványitch. I must ask Vasíly Leoníditch.

Coachman (*angrily*). He'd better hang the brutes

round his neck and lug them about with him! But no fear: he'd rather ride on horseback himself. It's he as spoilt Beauty without rhyme or reason. That was a horse! . . . Oh, dear! what a life!

[*Exit, slamming door.*

Theodore Iványitch. That's not right! Certainly not right! (*To* PEASANTS.) Well, then, it's time we were saying good-bye, friends.

Peasants. Good-bye!

[*Exit* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

[*As soon as he is gone a sound of groaning is heard from the top of the oven.*

Second Peasant. He's sleek, that one; looks like a general.

Servants' Cook. Rather! Why he has a room all to himself; he gets his washing, his tea and sugar, and food from the master's table.

Discharged Cook (*on the oven*). Why shouldn't the old beggar live well? He's lined his pockets all right!

Second Peasant. Who's that up there, on the oven?

Servants' Cook. Oh, it's only a man.

[*Silence.*

First Peasant. Well, and you, too, as I noticed a while since when you were supping, have capital food to eat.

Servants' Cook. We can't complain. She's not mean about the food. We have wheat bread every Sunday, and fish when a holiday happens to be a fast-day, too, and those who like may eat meat.

Second Peasant. And does any one tuck into flesh on fast-days?

Servants' Cook. Oh, they nearly all do! Only the old coachman—not the one who was here just now but the old one—and Simon, and I and the housekeeper, fast—all the others eat meat.

Second Peasant. And the master himself?

Servants' Cook. Catch him! Why, I bet he's forgotten there is such a thing as fasting!

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

First Peasant. That's the gentlefolks' way: they have got it all out of their books. 'Cos of their intelex!

Third Peasant. Shouldn't wonder if they feed on wheat bread every day!

Servants' Cook. Wheat bread, indeed! Much they think of wheat bread! You should see what food they eat. No end of different things!

First Peasant. In course gentlefolks' food is of an airial kind.

Servants' Cook. Airial, of course, but all the same they're good at stuffing themselves, they are!

First Peasant. Have healthy appekites, so to say.

Servants' Cook. 'Cos they always rinse it down! All with sweet wines, and spirits, and fizzy liquors. They have a different one to suit every kind of food. They eat and rinse it down, and eat and rinse it down, they do.

First Peasant. And so the food's floated down in proportion, so to say.

Servants' Cook. Ah, yes, they are good at stuffing! It's awful! You see, it's not just sitting down, eating, then saying grace and going away—they're always at it!

Second Peasant. Like pigs with their feet in the trough!

[*Peasants laugh.*

Servants' Cook. As soon as, by God's grace, they have opened their eyes, the samovár is brought in—tea, coffee, chocolate. Hardly is the second samovár emptied, a third has to be set. Then lunch, then dinner, then again coffee. They've hardly left off, then comes tea, and all sorts of tit-bits and sweetmeats—there's never an end to it! They even lie in bed and eat!

Third Peasant. There now; that's good.

[*Laughs.*

First and Second Peasants. What are you about?

Third Peasant. If I could only live a single day like that!

Second Peasant. But when do they do their work?

Servants' Cook. Work indeed! What is their work? Cards and piano—that's all their work. The young lady used to sit down to the piano as soon as she opened her eyes, and off she'd go! And that other one who lives here, the teacher, stands and waits. "When will the piano be

free?" When one has finished, off rattles the other, and sometimes they'd put two pianos near one another and four of 'em would bust out at once. Bust out in such a manner, you could hear 'em down here!

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

Servants' Cook. Well, and that's all the work they do! Piano or cards! As soon as they have met together—cards, wine, smoking, and so on, all night long. And as soon as they are up: eating again!

[*Enter* SIMON.

Simon. Hope you're enjoying your tea!

First Peasant. Come and join us.

Simon (*comes up to the table*). Thank you kindly.

[*First* PEASANT *pours out a cup of tea for him.*

Second Peasant. Where have you been?

Simon. Upstairs.

Second Peasant. Well, and what was being done there?

Simon. Why, I couldn't make it out at all! I don't know how to explain it.

Second Peasant. But what was it?

Simon. I can't explain it. They have been trying some kind of strength in me. I can't make it out. Tánya says, "Do it, and we'll get the land for our peasants; he'll sell it them."

Second Peasant. But how is she going to manage it?

Simon. I can't make it out, and she won't say. She says, "Do as I tell you," and that's all.

Second Peasant. But what is it you have to do?

Simon. Nothing just now. They made me sit down, put out the lights and told me to sleep. And Tánya had hidden herself there. They didn't see her, but I did.

Second Peasant. Why? What for?

Simon. The Lord only knows—I can't make it out.

First Peasant. Naturally, it is for the distraction of time.

Second Peasant. Well, it's clear you and I can make nothing of it. You had better tell me whether you have taken all your wages yet.

Simon. No, I've not drawn any. I have twenty-eight roubles to the good, I think.

Second Peasant. That's all right! Well, if God grants that we get the land, I'll take you home, Simon.

Simon. With all my heart!

Second Peasant. You've got spoilt, I should say. You'll not want to plough?

Simon. Plough? Only give me the chance! Plough or mow,—I'm game. Those are things one doesn't forget.

First Peasant. But it don't seem very desirous after town life, for example? Eh!

Simon. It's good enough for me. One can live in the country, too.

First Peasant. And Daddy Mítry here is already on the look-out for your place; he's hankering after a life of luckshury!

Simon. Eh, Daddy Mítry, you'd soon get sick of it. It seems easy enough when one looks at it, but there's a lot of running about that takes it out of one.

Servants' Cook. You should see one of their balls, Daddy Mítry, then you would be surprised!

Third Peasant. Why, do they eat all the time?

Servants' Cook. My eye! You should have seen what we had here awhile ago. Theodore Ivánitch took me upstairs and I peeped in. The ladies—awful! Dressed up! Dressed up, bless my heart, and all bare down to here, and their arms bare.

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

Second Peasant. Faugh! How beastly!

First Peasant. I take it the climate allows of that sort of thing!

Servants' Cook. Well, daddy, so I peeped in. Dear me, what it was like! All of 'em in their natural skins! Would you believe it: old women—our mistress, only think, she's a grandmother, and even she'd gone and bared her shoulders.

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

Servants' Cook. And what next? The music strikes up, and each man of 'em went up to his own, catches hold of her, and off they go twirling round and round!

Second Peasant. The old women, too?

Servants' Cook. Yes, the old ones, too.

Simon. No, the old ones sit still.

Servants' Cook. Get along,—I've seen it myself!

Simon. No, they don't.

Discharged Cook (*in a hoarse voice, looking down from the oven*). That's the Polka-Mazurka. You fools don't understand what dancing is. The way they dance . . .

Servants' Cook. Shut up, you dancer! And keep quiet —there's some one coming.

[*Enter* GREGORY; *old* COOK *hides hurriedly.*

Gregory (*to* SERVANTS' COOK). Bring some sour cabbage.

Servants' Cook. I am only just up from the cellar, and now I must go down again! Who is it for?

Gregory. For the young ladies. Be quick, and send it up with Simon. I can't wait!

Servants' Cook. There now, they tuck into sweetmeats till they are full up, and then they crave for sour cabbage!

First Peasant. That's to make a clearance.

Servants' Cook. Of course, and as soon as there is room inside, they begin again!

[*Takes basin, and exit.*

Gregory (*at* PEASANTS). Look at them, how they've established themselves down here! Mind, if the mistress finds it out she'll give it you hot, like she did this morning!

[*Exit, laughing.*

First Peasant. That's just it, she did raise a storm that time—awful!

Second Peasant. That time it looked as if the master was going to step in, but seeing that the missus was about to blow the very roof off the house, he slams the door. Have your own way, thinks he.

Third Peasant (*waving his arm*). It's the same everywhere. My old woman, let's say, she kicks up such a rumpus sometimes—it's just awful! Then I just get out of the hut. Let her go to Jericho! She'll give you one with the poker if you don't mind. Oh, Lord!

[JACOB *enters hurriedly with a prescription.*

Jacob. Here, Simon, you run to the chemist's and get these powders for the mistress!

Simon. But master told me not to go out.

Jacob. You've plenty of time; your business won't begin till after their tea. Hope you are enjoying your tea!

First Peasant. Thanks, come and join us.

[*Exit* SIMON.

Jacob. I haven't time. However, I'll just have one cup for company's sake.

First Peasant. And we've just been having a conversation as to how your mistress carried on so haughty this morning.

Jacob. Oh, she's a reg'lar fury! So hot-tempered, that she gets quite beside herself. Sometimes she even bursts out crying.

First Peasant. Now, there's a thing I wanted to ask you about. What, for example, be these mikerots she was illuding to erewhile? "They've infested the house with mikerots, with mikerots," she says. What is one to make of these same mikerots?

Jacob. Mikerogues, you mean! Well, it seems there is such a kind of bugs; all illnesses come from them, they say. So she says there are some of 'em on you. After you were gone, they washed and washed and sprinkled the place where you had stood. There's a kind of physic as kills these same bugs, they say.

Second Peasant. Then where have we got these bugs on us?

Jacob (*drinking his tea*). Why, they say they're so small that one can't see 'em even through a glass.

Second Peasant. Then how does she know I've got 'em on me? Perhaps there's more of that muck on her than on me!

Jacob. There now, you go and ask her!

Second Peasant. I believe it's humbug.

Jacob. Of course it's bosh. The doctors must invent something, or else what are they paid for? There's one comes to us every day. Comes,—talks a bit,—and pockets ten roubles!

Second Peasant. Nonsense!

Jacob. Why, there's one as takes a hundred!

First Peasant. A hundred? Humbug!

Jacob. A hundred. Humbug, you say? Why, if he

has to go out of town, he'll not do it for less than a thousand! "Give a thousand," he says, "or else you may kick the bucket for what I care!"

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord!

Second Peasant. Then does he know some charm?

Jacob. I suppose he must. I served at a General's outside Moscow once: a cross, terrible proud old fellow he was—just awful. Well, this General's daughter fell ill. They send for that doctor at once. "A thousand roubles, then I'll come." Well, they agreed, and he came. Then they did something or other he didn't like, and he bawled out at the General and says, "Is this the way you show your respect for me? Then I'll not attend her!" And, oh, my! The old General forgot all his pride, and starts wheedling him in every way not to chuck up the job!

First Peasant. And he got the thousand?

Jacob. Of course!

Second Peasant. That's easy got money. What wouldn't a peasant do with such a sum!

Third Peasant. And I think it's all bosh. That time my foot was festering I had it doctored ever so long. I spent nigh on five roubles on it,—then I gave up doctoring, and it got all right!

[DISCHARGED COOK *on the oven coughs.*

Jacob. Ah, the old crony is here again!

First Peasant. Who might that man be?

Jacob. He used to be our master's cook. He comes to see Loukérya.

First Peasant. Kitchen-master, as one might say. Then, does he live here?

Jacob. No, they won't allow that. He's here one day, there another. If he's got a copper he goes to a doss-house; but when he has drunk all, he comes here.

Second Peasant. How did he come to this?

Jacob. Simply grew weak. And what a man he used to be—like a gentleman! Went about with a gold watch; got forty roubles a month wages. And now look at him! He'd have starved to death long ago if it hadn't been for Loukérya.

[*Enter* SERVANTS' COOK *with the sour cabbage.*

Jacob (*to* SERVANTS' COOK). I see you've got Paul Petróvitch here again?

Servants' Cook. And where's he to go to? Is he to go and freeze?

Third Peasant. What liquor does. . . . Liquor, let's say . . .

[*Clicks his tongue sympathetically.*

Second Peasant. Of course. A firm man's firm as a rock; a weak man's weaker than water.

Discharged Cook (*gets off the oven with trembling hands and legs*). Loukérya, I say, give us a drop!

Servants' Cook. What are you up to? I'll give you such a drop! . . .

Discharged Cook. Have you no conscience? I'm dying! Brothers, a copper . . .

Servants' Cook. Get back on the oven, I tell you!

Discharged Cook. Half a glass only, cook, for Heaven's sake! I say, do you understand? I ask you in the name of Heaven, now!

Servants' Cook. Come along, here's some tea for you.

Discharged Cook. Tea; what is tea? Weak, sloppy stuff. A little vódka—just one little drop . . . Loukérya!

Third Peasant. Poor old soul, what agony it is!

Second Peasant. You'd better give him some.

Servants' Cook (*gets out a bottle and fills a wine-glass*). Here you are; you'll get no more.

Discharged Cook (*clutches hold of it and drinks, trembling all over*). Loukérya, Cook! I am drinking, and you must understand . . .

Servants' Cook. Now, then, stop your chatter! Get on to the oven, and let not a breath of you be heard!

[*The old* COOK *meekly begins to climb up, muttering something to himself.*

Second Peasant. What it is, when a man gives way to his weakness!

First Peasant. That's just it—human weakness.

Third Peasant. That goes without saying.

[*The* DISCHARGED COOK *settles down, muttering all the time.*

[*Silence.*

Second Peasant. I want to ask you something: that girl of Aksínya's as comes from our village and is living here. How is she? What is she like? How is she living—I mean, does she live honest?

Jacob. She's a nice girl; one can say nothing but good of her.

Servants' Cook. I'll tell you straight, daddy; I know this here establishment out and out, and if you mean to have Tánya for your son's wife—be quick about it, before she comes to grief, or else she'll not escape!

Jacob. Yes, that's true. A while ago we had a girl here, Nataly. She was a good girl too. And she was lost without rhyme or reason. No better than that chap!

[*Pointing to the old* Cook.

Servants' Cook. There's enough to dam a mill-pool, with the likes of us, as perish! 'Cos why, every one is tempted by the easy life and the good food. And see there,—as soon as one has tasted the good food she goes and slips. And once she's slipped, they don't want her, but get a fresh one in her place. So it was with dear little Nataly; she also slipped, and they turned her out. She had a child and fell ill, and died in the hospital last spring. And what a girl she used to be!

Third Peasant. Oh, Lord! People are weak; they ought to be pitied.

Discharged Cook. Those devils pity? No fear! (*He hangs his legs down from the oven.*) I have stood roasting myself by the kitchen range for thirty years, and now that I am not wanted, I may go and die like a dog. . . . Pity indeed! . . .

First Peasant. That's just it. It's the old circumstances.

Second Peasant.

While they drank and they fed, you were "curly head."
When they'd finished the prog, 'twas "Get out, mangy dog!"

Third Peasant. Oh Lord!

Discharged Cook. Much you know. What is "Sautey a la Bongmont"? What is "Bavassary"? Oh, the things I could make! Think of it! The Emperor tasted my work,

and now the devils want me no longer. But I am not going to stand it!

Servants' Cook. Now, then, stop that noise, mind. . . . Get up right into the corner, so that no one can see you, or else Theodore Ivánitch or some one may come in, and both you and me'll be turned out!

[*Silence.*

Jacob. And do you know my part of the country? I'm from Voznesénsky.

Second Peasant. Not know it? Why, it's no more'n ten miles from our village; not *that* across the ford! Do you cultivate any land there?

Jacob. My brother does, and I send my wages. Though I live here, I am dying for a sight of home.

First Peasant. That's just it.

Second Peasant. Then Anísim is your brother?

Jacob. Own brother. He lives at the farther end of the village.

Second Peasant. Of course, I know; his is the third house.

[*Enter* TÁNYA, *running.*

Tánya. Jacob, what are you doing, amusing yourself here? She is calling you!

Jacob. I'm coming; but what's up?

Tánya. Frisk is barking; it's hungry. And she's scolding you. "How cruel he is," she says. "He's no feeling," she says. "It's long past Frisk's dinner-time, and he has not brought her food!"

[*Laughs.*

Jacob (*rises to go*). Oh, she's cross? What's going to happen now, I wonder?

Servants' Cook. Here, take the cabbage with you.

Jacob. All right, give it here.

[*Takes basin, and exit.*

First Peasant. Who is going to dine now?

Tánya. Why, the dog! It's her dog. (*Sits down and takes up the tea-pot.*) Is there any more tea? I've brought some.

[*Puts fresh tea into the tea-pot.*

First Peasant. Dinner for a dog?

Tánya. Yes, of course! They prepare a special cutlet for her; it must not be too fat. And I do the washing—the dog's washing, I mean.

Third Peasant. Oh Lord!

Tánya. It's like that gentleman who had a funeral for his dog.

Second Peasant. What's that?

Tánya. Why, some one told me he had a dog—I mean the gentleman had a dog. And it died. It was winter, and he went in his sledge to bury that dog. Well, he buried it, and on the way home he sits and cries—the gentleman does. Well, there was such a bitter frost that the coachman's nose keeps running, and he has to keep wiping it. Let me fill your cup! (*Fills it.*) So he keeps wiping his nose, and the gentleman sees it, and says, "What are you crying about?" And the coachman, he says, "Why, sir, how can I help it; is there another dog like him?"

[*Laughs.*

Second Peasant. And I daresay he thinks to himself, "If your own self was to kick the bucket I'd not cry."

[*Laughs.*

Discharged Cook (*from up on the oven*). That is true; that's right!

Tánya. Well, the gentleman, he gets home and goes straight to his lady: "What a good-hearted man our coachman is; he was crying all the way home about poor Dash. Have him called. . . . Here, drink this glass of vódka," he says, "and here's a rouble as a reward for you." That's just like her saying Jacob has no feelings for her dog!

[*The* PEASANTS *laugh.*

First Peasant. That's the style!

Second Peasant. That was a go!

Third Peasant. Aye, lassie, but you've set us a-laughing!

Tánya (*pouring out more tea*). Have some more! Yes, it only seems that our life is pleasant; but sometimes it is very disgusting,—clearing up all their messes! Faugh! It's better in the country. (PEASANTS *turn their cups upside-down, as a polite sign that they have had enough.* TÁNYA *pours out more tea.*) Have some more, Efím Antónitch. I'll fill your cup, Mítry Vlásitch.

Third Peasant. All right, fill it, fill it.

First Peasant. Well, dear, and what progression is our business making?

Tánya. It's getting on . . .

First Peasant. Simon told us . . .

Tánya (*quickly*). Did he?

Second Peasant. But he could not make us understand.

Tánya. I can't tell you now, but I'm doing my best—all I can! And I've got your paper here! (*Shows the paper hidden under the bib of her apron.*) If only one thing succeeds. . . . (*Shrieks.*) Oh, how nice it would be!

Second Peasant. Don't lose that paper, mind. It has cost money.

Tánya. Never fear. You only want him to sign it? Is that all?

Third Peasant. Why, what else? Let's say he's signed it, and it's done! (*Turns his cup upside-down.*) I've had enough.

Tánya (*aside*). He'll sign it; you'll see he will . . . Have some more.

[*Pours out tea.*

First Peasant. If only you get this business about the sale of the land settled, the Commune would pay your marriage expenses.

[*Refuses the tea.*

Tánya (*pouring out tea*). Do have another cup.

Third Peasant. You get it done, and we'll arrange your marriage, and I myself, let's say, will dance at the wedding. Though I've never danced in all my born days, I'll dance then!

Tánya (*laughing*). All right, I'll be in hopes of it.

[*Silence.*

Second Peasant (*examines* TÁNYA). That's all very well, but you're not fit for peasant work.

Tánya. Who? I? Why, don't you think me strong enough? You should see me lacing up my mistress. There's many a peasant couldn't tug as hard.

Second Peasant. Where do you tug her to?

Tánya. Well, there's a thing made with bone, like—

something like a stiff jacket, only up to here! Well, and I pull the strings just as when you saddle a horse—when you . . . what d'ye call it? You know, when you spit on your hands!

Second Peasant. Tighten the girths, you mean.

Tánya. Yes, yes, that's it. And you know I mustn't shove against her with my knee.

[*Laughs.*

Second Peasant. Why do you pull her in?

Tánya. For a reason!

Second Peasant. Why, is she doing penance?

Tánya. No, it's for beauty's sake!

First Peasant. That's to say, you pull in her paunch for appearance' sake.

Tánya. Sometimes I lace her up so that her eyes are ready to start from her head, and she says, "Tighter," till my hands tingle. And you say I'm not strong!

[PEASANTS *laugh and shake their heads.*

Tánya. But here, I've been jabbering.

[*Runs away, laughing.*

Third Peasant. Ah, the lassie has made us laugh!

First Peasant. She's a tidy one!

Second Peasant. She's not bad.

[*Enter* SAHÁTOF *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. SAHÁTOF *holds a teaspoon in his hand.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Not exactly a dinner, but a *déjeuner dinatoire.* And first-rate it was, I tell you. Ham of sucking-pig, delicious! Roulier feeds one splendidly! I've only just returned. (*Sees* PEASANTS.) Ah, the peasants are here again!

Sahátof. Yes, yes, that's all very well, but we came here to hide this article. Where shall we hide it?

Vasíly Leoníditch. Excuse me a moment. (*To* SERVANTS' COOK.) Where are the dogs?

Servants' Cook. In the coachman's quarters. You can't keep dogs in the servants' kitchen!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Ah, in the coachman's quarters? All right.

Sahátof. I am waiting.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Excuse me, please. Eh, what? Hide

it? I'll tell you what. Let's put it into one of the peasants' pockets. That one. I say, where's your pocket? Eh, what?

Third Peasant. What for d'ye want my pocket? You're a good 'un! My pocket! There's money in my pocket!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Where's your bag, then?

Third Peasant. What for?

Servants' Cook. What d'you mean? That's the young master!

Vasíly Leoníditch (*laughs. To* SAHÁTOF). D'you know why he's so frightened? Shall I tell you? He's got a heap of money. Eh, what?

Sahátof. Yes, yes, I see. Well, you talk to them a bit, and I'll put it into that bag without being observed, so that they should not notice and could not point it out to him. Talk to them.

Vasíly Leoníditch. All right! (*To* PEASANTS.) Well then, old fellows, how about the land? Are you buying it? Eh, what?

First Peasant. We have made an offering, so to say, with our whole heart. But there,—the business don't come into action nohow.

Vasíly Leoníditch. You should not be so stingy! Land is an important matter! I told you about planting mint. Or else tobacco would also do.

First Peasant. That's just it. Every kind of producks.

Third Peasant. And you help us, master. Ask your father. Or else how are we to live? There's so little land. A fowl, let's say, there's not enough room for a fowl to run about.

Sahátof (*having put the spoon into a bag belonging to the* THIRD PEASANT). *C'est fait.* Ready. Come along.

[*Exit.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. So don't be stingy! Eh? Well, good-bye. [*Exit.*

Third Peasant. Didn't I say, come to some lodging-house? Well, supposing we'd had to give three-pence each, then at least we'd have been in peace. As to here, the Lord be merciful! "Give us the money," he says. What's that for?

Second Peasant. He's drunk, I daresay.

[PEASANTS *turn their cups upside-down, rise, and cross themselves.*

First Peasant. And d'you mind what a saying he threw out? Sowing mint! One must know how to understand them, that one must!

Second Peasant. Sow mint indeed! He'd better bend his own back at that work, and then it's not mint he'll hanker after, no fear! Well, many thanks! . . . And now, good woman, would you tell us where we could lie down to sleep?

Servants' Cook. One of you can lie on the oven, and the others on these benches.

Third Peasant. Christ save you!

[*Prays, crossing himself.*

First Peasant. If only by God's help we get our business settled! (*Lies down.*) Then to-morrow, after dinner, we'd be off by the train, and on Tuesday we'd be home again.

Second Peasant. Are you going to put out the light?

Servants' Cook. Put it out? Oh, no! They'll keep running down here, first for one thing then another. . . . You lie down, I'll lower it.

Second Peasant. How is one to live, having so little land? Why, this year, I have had to buy corn since Christmas. And the oat-straw is all used up. I'd like to get hold of ten acres, and then I could take Simon back.

Third Peasant. You're a man with a family. You'd get the land cultivated without trouble. If only the business comes off.

Second Peasant. We must pray to the Holy Virgin, maybe she'll help us out. (*Silence, broken by sighs. Then footsteps and voices are heard outside. The door opens. Enter* GROSSMAN *hurriedly, with his eyes bandaged, holding* SAHÁTOF'S *hand, and followed by the* PROFESSOR *and the* DOCTOR, *the* FAT LADY *and* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH, BETSY *and* PETRÍSTCHEF, VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *and* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA, ANNA PÁVLOVNA *and the* BARONESS, THEODORE IVÁNITCH *and* TÁNYA.)

[PEASANTS *jump up.* GROSSMAN *comes forward stepping quickly, then stops.*

Fat Lady. You need not trouble yourselves; I have undertaken the task of observing, and am strictly fulfilling my duty! Mr. Sahátof, are you not leading him?

Sahátof. Of course not!

Fat Lady. You must not lead him, but neither must you resist! (*To* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH.) I know these experiments. I have tried them myself. Sometimes I used to feel a certain effluence, and as soon as I felt it . . .

Leoníd Fyódoritch. May I beg of you to keep perfect silence?

Fat Lady. Oh, I understand so well! I have experienced it myself. As soon as my attention was diverted I could no longer . . .

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Sh . . . !

[GROSSMAN *goes about, searches near the* FIRST *and* SECOND PEASANTS, *then approaches the* THIRD, *and stumbles over a bench.*

Baroness. Mais dites-moi, on le paye? [1]

Anna Pávlovna. Je ne saurais vous dire.

Baroness. Mais c'est un monsieur?

Anna Pávlovna. Oh, oui!

Baroness. Ça tient du miraculeux. N'est ce pas? Comment est-ce qu'il trouve?

Anna Pávlovna. Je ne saurais vous dire. Mon mari vous l'expliquera. (*Noticing* PEASANTS, *turns round, and sees the* SERVANTS' COOK.) *Pardon* . . . what is this?

[BARONESS *goes up to the group.*

Anna Pávlovna (*to* SERVANTS' COOK). Who let the peasants in?

Servants' Cook. Jacob brought them in.

Anna Pávlovna. Who gave Jacob the order?

[1] *Baroness.* But tell me, please, is he paid for this?
Anna Pávlovna. I really do not know.
Baroness. But he is a gentleman?
Anna Pávlovna. Oh, yes!
Baroness. It is almost miraculous. Isn't it? How does he manage to find things?
Anna Pávlovna. I really can't tell you. My husband will explain it to you. . . . Excuse me. . . .

Servants' Cook. I can't say. Theodore Iványitch has seen them.

Anna Pávlovna. Leoníd!

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *does not hear, being absorbed in the search, and says, Sh.. . .*

Anna Pávlovna. Theodore Iványitch! What is the meaning of this? Did you not see me disinfecting the whole hall, and now the whole kitchen is infected, all the rye bread, the milk . . .

Theodore Iványitch. I thought there would not be any danger if they came here. The men have come on business. They have far to go, and are from our village.

Anna Pávlovna. That's the worst of it! They are from the Koursk village, where people are dying of diphtheria like flies! But the chief thing is, I ordered them out of the house! . . . Did I, or did I not? (*Approaches the others that have gathered round the* PEASANTS.) Be careful! Don't touch them—they are all infected with diphtheria!

[*No one heeds her, and she steps aside in a dignified manner and stands quietly waiting.*

Petrístchef (*sniffs loudly*). I don't know if it is diphtheria, but there is some kind of infection in the air. Don't you notice it?

Betsy. Stop your nonsense! Vovo, which bag is it in?

Vasíly Leoníditch. That one, that one. He is getting near, very near!

Petrístchef. Is it spirits divine, or spirits of wine?

Betsy. Now your cigarette comes in handy for once. Smoke closer, closer to me.

[PETRÍSTCHEF *leans over her and smokes at her.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. He's getting near, I tell you. Eh, what?

GROSSMAN (*searches excitedly round the* THIRD PEASANT). It is here; I feel it is!

Fat Lady. Do you feel an effluence?

[GROSSMAN *stoops and finds the spoon in the bag.*

All. Bravo!

[*General enthusiasm.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Ah! So that's where our spoon was. (*To* PEASANTS.) Then that's the sort you are!

Third Peasant. What sort? I didn't take your spoon! What are you making out? I didn't take it, and my soul knows nothing about it. I didn't take it—there! Let him do what he likes. I knew he came here for no good. "Where's your bag?" says he. I didn't take it, the Lord is my witness! (*Crosses himself.*) I didn't take it!

[*The young people group round the* PEASANT, *laughing.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch (*angrily to his son*). Always playing the fool! (*To the* THIRD PEASANT.) Never mind, friend! We know you did not take it; it was only an experiment.

Grossman (*removes bandage from his eyes, and pretends to be coming to*). Can I have a little water?

[*All fuss round him.*

Vasíly Leoníditch. Let's go straight from here into the coachman's room. I've got a bitch there—*épâtante!* [1] Eh, what?

Betsy. What a horrid word! Couldn't you say dog?

Vasíly Leoníditch. No. I can't say—Betsy is a man, *épâtante.* I should have to say young woman; it's a parallel case. Eh, what? Márya Konstantínovna, isn't it true? Good, eh?

[*Laughs loudly.*

Márya Konstantínovna. Well, let us go.

[*Exeunt* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA, BETSY, PETRÍSTCHEF, *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH.

Fat Lady (*to* GROSSMAN). Well? how are you? Have you rested? (GROSSMAN *does not answer. To* SAHÁTOF.) And you, Mr. Sahátof, did you feel the effluence?

Sahátof. I felt nothing. Yes, it was very fine—very fine. Quite a success!

Baroness—Admirable! Ça ne le fait pas souffrir? [2]

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Pas le moins du monde.

Professor (*to* GROSSMAN). May I trouble you?

[1] Stunning!

[2] *Baroness.* Capital! Does it not cause him any pain?
Leoníd Fyódoritch. Not the slightest.

(*Hands him a thermometer.*) At the beginning of the experiment it was 37 decimal 2 degrees.[1] (*To* DOCTOR.) That's right, I think? Would you mind feeling his pulse? Some loss is inevitable.

Doctor (*to* GROSSMAN). Now then, sir, let's have your hand; we'll see, we'll see.

[*Takes out his watch and feels* GROSSMAN'S *pulse.*

Fat Lady (*to* GROSSMAN). One moment! The condition you were in could not be called sleep?

Grossman (*wearily*). It was hypnosis.

Sahátof. In that case, are we to understand that you hypnotised yourself?

Grossman. And why not? An hypnotic state may ensue not only in consequence of association—the sound of the tom-tom, for instance, in Charcot's method—but by merely entering an hypnogenetic zone.

Sahátof. Granting that, it would still be desirable to define what hypnotism is, more exactly?

Professor. Hypnotism is a phenomenon resulting from the transmutation of one energy into another.

Grossman. Charcot does not so define it.

Sahátof. A moment, just a moment! That is your definition, but Liébault told me himself . . .

Doctor (*lets go of* GROSSMAN'S *pulse*). Ah, that's all right; well, now, the temperature?

Fat Lady (*interrupting*). No, allow me! I agree with the Professor. And here's the very best proof. After my illness, when I lay insensible, a desire to speak came over me. In general I am of a silent disposition, but then I was overcome by this desire to speak, and I spoke and spoke, and I was told that I spoke in such a way that every one was astonished! (*To* SAHÁTOF.) But I think I interrupted you?

Sahátof (*with dignity*). Not at all. Pray continue.

Doctor. Pulse 82, and the temperature has risen three-tenths of a degree.

Professor. There you are! That's a proof! That's just as it should be. (*Takes out pocket-book and writes.*) 82,

[1] He uses a Centigrade thermometer.

yes? And 37 and 5. When the hypnotic state is induced, it invariably produces a heightened action of the heart.

Doctor. I can, as a medical man, bear witness that your prognosis was justified by the event.

Professor (*to* SAHÁTOF). You were saying? . . .

Sahátof. I wished to say that Liébault told me himself that the hypnotic is only one particular psychical state, increasing susceptibility to suggestion.

Professor. That is so, but still the law of equivalents is the chief thing.

Grossman. Moreover, Liébault is far from being an authority, while Charcot has studied the subject from all sides, and has proved that hypnotism produced by a blow, a trauma . . .

All talking together.

Sahátof. Yes, but I don't reject Charcot's labor. I know him also, I am only repeating what Liébault told me . . .

Grossman (*excitedly*). There are 3000 patients in the Salpêtrière, and I have gone through the whole course.

Professor. Excuse me, gentlemen, but that is not the point.

Fat Lady (*interrupting*). One moment, I will explain it to you in two words. When my husband was ill, all the doctors gave him up . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. However, we had better go upstairs again. Baroness, this way!

[*Exeunt* GROSSMAN, SAHÁTOF, PROFESSOR, DOCTOR, *the* FAT LADY, *and* BARONESS, *talking loudly and interrupting each other.*

Anna Pávlovna (*catching hold of* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH'S *arm*). How often have I asked you not to interfere in household matters! You think of nothing but your nonsense, and the whole house is on my shoulders. You will infect us all!

Leonid Fyódoritch. What? How? I don't understand what you mean.

Anna Pávlovna. How? Why, people ill of diphtheria sleep in the kitchen, which is in constant communication with the whole house.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, but I . . .

Anna Pávlovna. What, I?

Leonid Fyódoritch. I know nothing about it.

Anna Pávlovna. It's your duty to know, if you are the head of the family. Such things must not be done.

Leonid Fyódoritch. But I never thought . . . I thought . . .

Anna Pávlovna. It is sickening to listen to you!

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *remains silent.*

Anna Pávlovna (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). Turn them out at once! They are to leave my kitchen immediately! It is terrible! No one listens to me; they do it out of spite. . . . I turn them out from there, and they bring them in here! And with my illness . . . (*Gets more and more excited, and at last begins to cry.*) Doctor! Doctor! Peter Petróvitch! . . . He's gone too! . . .

[*Exit, sobbing, followed by* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH.

[*All stand silent for a long time.*

Third Peasant. Botheration take them all! If one don't mind, the police will be after one here. And I have never been to law in all my born days. Let's go to some lodging-house, lads!

Theodore Iványitch (*to* TÁNYA). What are we to do?

Tánya. Never mind, Theodore Iványitch, let them sleep with the coachman.

Theodore Iványitch. How can we do that? The coachman was complaining as it is, that his place is full of dogs.

Tánya. Well, then, the porter's lodge.

Theodore Iványitch. And supposing it's found out?

Tánya. It won't be found out! Don't trouble about that, Theodore Iványitch. How can one turn them out now, at night? They'll not find anywhere to go to.

Theodore Iványitch. Well, do as you please. Only they must go away from here.

[*Exit.*

[PEASANTS *take their bags.*

Discharged Cook. Oh those damned fiends! It's all their fat! Fiends!

Servants' Cook. You be quiet there. Thank goodness they didn't see you!

Tánya. Well then, daddy, come along to the porter's lodge.

First Peasant. Well, but how about our business? How, for example, about the applience of his hand to the signature? May we be in hopes?

Tánya. We'll see in an hour's time.

Second Peasant. You'll do the trick?

Tánya (*laughs*). Yes, God willing!

CURTAIN

ACT III

Evening of the same day. The small drawing-room in LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH'S *house, where the séances are always held.* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *and the* PROFESSOR.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well then, shall we risk a séance with our new medium?

Professor. Yes, certainly. He is a powerful medium, there is no doubt about it. And it is especially desirable that the séance should take place to-day with the same people. Grossman will certainly respond to the influence of the mediumistic energy, and then the connection and identity of the different phenomena will be still more evident. You will see then that, if the medium is as strong as he was just now, Grossman will vibrate.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Then I will send for Simon and ask those who wish to attend to come in.

Professor. Yes, all right! I will just jot down a few notes.

[*Takes out his note-book and writes.*

[*Enter* SAHÁTOF.

Sahátof. They have just settled down to whist in Anna Pávlovna's drawing-room, and as I am not wanted there—and as I am interested in your séance—I have put in an appearance here. But will there be a séance?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, certainly!

Sahátof. In spite of the absence of Mr. Kaptchítch's mediumistic powers?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Vous avez la main heureuse.[1] Fancy, that very peasant whom I mentioned to you this morning turns out to be an undoubted medium.

Sahátof. Dear me! Yes, that is peculiarly interesting!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, we tried a few preliminary experiments with him just after dinner.

[1] *Leonid Fyódoritch.* You bring good luck.

Sahátof. So you've had time already to experiment, and to convince yourself . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, perfectly! And he turns out to be an exceptionally powerful medium.

Sahátof (*incredulously*). Dear me!

Leonid Fyódoritch. It turns out that it has long been noticed in the servants' hall. When he sits down to table, the spoon springs into his hand of its own accord! (*To the* PROFESSOR.) Had you heard about it?

Professor. No, I had not heard that detail.

Sanátof (*to the* PROFESSOR). But still, you admit the possibility of such phenomena?

Professor. What phenomena?

Sahátof. Well, spiritualistic, mediumistic, and supernatural phenomena in general.

Professor. The question is, what do we consider supernatural? When, not a living man but a piece of stone attracted a nail to itself, how did the phenomena strike the first observers? As something natural? Or supernatural?

Sahátof. Well, of course; but phenomena such as the magnet attracting iron always repeat themselves.

Professor. It is just the same in this case. The phenomenon repeats itself and we experiment with it. And not only that, but we apply to the phenomena we are investigating the laws common to other phenomena. These phenomena seem supernatural only because their causes are attributed to the medium himself. But that is where the mistake lies. The phenomena are not caused by the medium, but by psychic energy acting through a medium, and that is a very different thing. The whole matter lies in the law of equivalents.

Sahátof. Yes, certainly, but . . .

[*Enter* TÁNYA, *who hides behind the hangings.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Only remember that we cannot reckon on any results with certainty, with this medium any more than with Home or Kaptchítch.[1] We may not succeed, but on the other hand we may even have perfect materialisation.

Sahátof. Materialisation even? What do you mean by materialisation?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Why, I mean that some one who is dead—say, your father or your grandfather—may appear, take you by the hand, or give you something; or else some one may suddenly rise into the air, as happened to Alexéy Vladímiritch last time.

Professor. Of course, of course. But the chief thing is the explanation of the phenomena, and the application to them of general laws.

[*Enter the* FAT LADY.

Fat Lady. Anna Pávlovna has allowed me to join you.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Very pleased.

Fat Lady. Oh, how tired Grossman seems! He could scarcely hold his cup. Did you notice (*to the* PROFESSOR) how pale he turned at the moment he approached the hiding-place? I noticed it at once, and was the first to mention it to Anna Pávlovna.

Professor. Undoubtedly,—loss of vital energy.

Fat Lady. Yes, it's just as I say, one should not abuse that sort of thing. You know, a hypnotist once suggested to a friend of mine, Véra Kónshin (oh, you know her, of course)—well, he suggested that she should leave off smoking,—and her back began to ache!

Professor (*trying to have his say*). The temperature and the pulse clearly indicate . . .

Fat Lady. One moment! Allow me! Well, I said to her: it's better to smoke than to suffer so with one's nerves. Of course, smoking is injurious; I should like to give it up myself, but, do what I will, I can't! Once I managed not to smoke for a fortnight, but could hold out no longer.

Professor (*again trying to speak*). Clearly proves . . .

Fat Lady. Yes, no! Allow me, just one word! You say, "loss of strength." And I was also going to say that, when I travelled with post-horses . . . the roads used to be dreadful in those days—you don't remember—but I have noticed that all our nervousness comes from railways! I, for instance, can't sleep while travelling; I cannot fall asleep to save my life!

Professor (*makes another attempt, which the* FAT LADY *baffles*). The loss of strength . . .

Sahátof (*smiling*). Yes; oh yes!

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *rings.*

Fat Lady. I am awake one night, and another, and a third, and still I can't sleep!

[*Enter* GREGORY.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Please tell Theodore to get everything ready for the séance, and send Simon here—Simon, the butler's assistant,—do you hear?

Gregory. Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*

Professor (*to* SAHÁTOF). The observation of the temperature and the pulse have shown loss of vital energy. The same will happen in consequence of the mediumistic phenomena. The law of the conservation of energy . . .

Fat Lady. Oh yes, yes; I was just going to say that I am very glad that a simple peasant turns out to be a medium. That's very good. I always did say that the Slavophils . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Let's go into the drawing-room in the meantime.

Fat Lady. Allow me, just one word! The Slavophils are right; but I always told my husband that one ought never to exaggerate anything! "The golden mean," you know. What is the use of maintaining that the common people are all perfect, when I have myself seen . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Won't you come into the drawing-room?

Fat Lady. A boy—that high—who drank! I gave him a scolding at once. And he was grateful to me afterwards. They are children, and, as I always say, children need both love and severity!

[*Exeunt all, all talking together.*

[TÁNYA *enters from behind the hangings.*

Tánya. Oh, if it would only succeed!

[*Begins fastening some threads.*

[*Enter* BETSY *hurriedly.*

Betsy. Isn't papa here? (*Looks inquiringly at* TÁNYA.) What are you doing here?

Tánya. Oh, Miss Elizabeth, I have only just come; I only wished . . . only came in . . .

[*Embarrassed.*

Betsy. But they are going to have a séance here directly. (*Notices* TÁNYA *drawing in the threads, looks at her, and suddenly bursts out laughing.*) Tánya! Why, it's you who do it all? Now don't deny it. And last time it was you too? Yes, it was, it was!

Tánya. Miss Elizabeth, dearest!

Betsy (*delighted*). Oh, that is a joke! Well, I never. But why do you do it?

Tánya. Oh miss, dear miss, don't betray me!

Betsy. Not for the world! I'm awfully glad. Only tell me how you manage it?

Tánya. Well, I just hide, and then, when it's all dark, I come out and do it. That's how.

Betsy (*pointing to threads*). And what is this for? You needn't tell me. I see; you draw . . .

Tánya. Miss Elizabeth, darling! I will confess it, but only to you. I used to do it just for fun, but now I mean business.

Betsy. What? How? What business?

Tánya. Well, you see, those peasants that came this morning, you saw them. They want to buy some land, and your father won't sell it; well, and Theodore Iványitch, he says it's the spirits as forbid him. So I have had a thought as . . .

Betsy. Oh, I see! Well, you are a clever girl! Do it, do it. . . . But how will you manage it?

Tánya. Well, I thought, when they put out the lights, I'll at once begin knocking and shying things about, touching their heads with the threads, and at last I'll take the paper about the land and throw it on the table. I've got it here.

Betsy. Well, and then?

Tánya. Why, don't you see? They will be astonished. The peasants had the paper, and now it's here. I will teach . . .

Betsy. Why, of course! Simon is the medium today!

Tánya. Well, I'll teach him . . . (*Laughs so that she can't continue.*) I'll tell him to squeeze with his hands any one he can get hold of! Of course, not your father—he'd

never dare do that—but any one else; he'll squeeze till it's signed.

Betsy (*laughing*). But that's not the way it is done. Mediums never do anything themselves.

Tánya. Oh, never mind. It's all one; I daresay it'll turn out all right.

[*Enter* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

[*Exit* BETSY, *making signs to* TÁNYA.

Theodore Iványitch. Why are you here?

Tánya. It's you I want, Theodore Iványitch, dear . . .

Theodore Iványitch. Well, what is it?

Tánya. About that affair of mine as I spoke of.

Theodore Iványitch (*laughs*). I've made the match; yes, I've made the match. The matter is settled; we have shaken hands on it, only not had a drink on it.

Tánya (*with a shriek*). Never! So it's all right?

Theodore Iványitch. Don't I tell you so? He says, "I shall consult the missus, and then, God willing . . ."

Tánya. Is that what he said? (*Shrieks*.) Dear Theodore Iványitch, I'll pray for you all the days of my life!

Theodore Iványitch. All right! All right! Now is not the time. I've been ordered to arrange the room for the séance.

Tánya. Let me help you. How's it to be arranged?

Theodore Iványitch. How? Why, the table in the middle of the room—chairs—the guitar—the accordion. The lamp is not wanted, only candles.

Tánya (*helps* THEODORE IVÁNITCH *to place the things*). Is that right? The guitar here, and here the inkstand. (*Places it*.) So?

Theodore Iványitch. Can it be true that they'll make Simon sit here?

Tánya. I suppose so; they've done it once.

Theodore Iványitch. Wonderful! (*Puts on his pince-nez*.) But is he clean?

Tánya. How should I know?

Theodore Iványitch. Then, I'll tell you what . . .

Tánya. Yes, Theodore Iványitch?

Theodore Iványitch. Go and take a nail-brush and some

Pears' soap; you may take mine . . . and go and cut his claws and scrub his hands as clean as possible.

Tánya. He can do it himself.

Theodore Iványitch. Well then, tell him to. And tell him to put on a clean shirt as well.

Tánya. All right, Theodore Iványitch.

[*Exit.*

Theodore Iványitch (*sits down in an easy-chair*). They're educated and learned—Alexéy Vladímiritch now, he's a professor—and yet sometimes one can't help doubting very much. The people's rude superstitions are being abolished: hobgoblins, sorcerers, witches. . . . But if one considers it, is not this equally superstitious? How is it possible that the souls of the dead should come and talk, and play the guitar? No! Some one is fooling them, or they are fooling themselves. And as to this business with Simon—it's simply incomprehensible. (*Looks at an album.*) Here's their spiritualistic album. How is it possible to photograph a spirit? But here is the likeness of a Turk and Leoníd Fyódoritch sitting by. . . . Extraordinary human weakness!

[*Enter* Leoníd Fyódoritch.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Is it all ready?

Theodore Iványitch (*rising leisurely*). Quite ready. (*Smiles.*) Only I don't know about your new medium. I hope he won't disgrace you, Leoníd Fyódoritch.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. No, I and Alexéy Vladímiritch have tested him. He is a wonderfully powerful medium!

Theodore Iványitch. Well, I don't know. But is he clean enough? I don't suppose you have thought of ordering him to wash his hands? It might be rather inconvenient.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. His hands? Oh yes! They're not clean, you think?

Theodore Iványitch. What can you expect? He's a peasant, and there will be ladies present, and Márya Vasílevna.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. It will be all right.

Theodore Iványitch. And then I have something to re-

port to you. Timothy, the coachman, complains that he can't keep things clean because of the dogs.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*arranging the things on the table absentmindedly*). What dogs?

Theodore Iványitch. The three hounds that came for Vasíly Leoníditch to-day.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*vexed*). Tell Anna Pávlovna! She can do as she likes about it. I have no time.

Theodore Iványitch. But you know her weakness. . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. 'Tis just as she likes, let her do as she pleases. As for him,—one never gets anything but unpleasantness from him. Besides, I am busy.

[*Enter* SIMON, *smiling; he has a sleeveless peasant's coat on.*

Simon. I was ordered to come.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, it's all right. Let me see your hands. That will do, that will do very well! Well, then, my good fellow, you must do just as you did before,—sit down, and give way to your mood. But don't think at all.

Simon. Why should I think? The more one thinks, the worse it is.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Just so, just so, exactly! The less conscious one is, the greater is the power. Don't think, but give in to your mood. If you wish to sleep, sleep; if you wish to walk, walk. Do you understand?

Simon. How could one help understanding? It's simple enough.

Leonid Fyódoritch. But above all, don't be frightened. Because you might be surprised yourself. You must understand that just as we live here, so a whole world of invisible spirits live here also.

Theodore Iványitch (*improving on what* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *has said*). Invisible feelings, do you understand?

Simon (*laughs*). How can one help understanding! It's very plain as you put it.

Leonid Fyódoritch. You may rise up in the air, or something of the kind, but don't be frightened.

Simon. Why should I be frightened? That won't matter at all.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well then, I'll go and call them all. . . . Is everything ready?

Theodore Iványitch. I think so.

Leonid Fyódoritch. But the slates?

Theodore Iványitch. They are downstairs. I'll bring them.

[*Exit.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. All right then. So don't be afraid, but be at your ease.

Simon. Had I not better take off my coat? One would be more easy like.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Your coat? Oh no. Don't take that off.

[*Exit.*

Simon. She tells me to do the same again, and she will again shy things about. How isn't she afraid?

[*Enter* TÁNYA *in her stockings and in a dress of the color of the wall-paper.* SIMON *laughs.*

Tánya. Shsh! . . . They'll hear! There, stick these matches on your fingers as before. (*Sticks them on.*) Well, do you remember everything?

Simon (*bending his fingers in, one by one*). First of all, wet the matches and wave my hands about, that's one. Then make my teeth chatter, like this . . . that's two. But I've forgotten the third thing.

Tánya. And it's the third as is the chief thing. Don't forget as soon as the paper falls on the table—I shall ring the little bell—then you do like this. . . . Spread your arms out far and catch hold of some one, whoever it is as sits nearest, and catch hold of him. And then squeeze! (*Laughs.*) Whether it's a gentleman or a lady, it's all one; you just squeeze 'em, and don't let 'em go,—as if it were in your sleep, and chatter with your teeth, or else howl like this. (*Howls sotto-voce.*) And when I begin to play on the guitar, then stretch yourself as if you were waking up, you know. . . . Will you remember everything?

Simon. Yes, I'll remember, but it is too funny.

Tánya. But mind you don't laugh. Still, it won't matter much if you do laugh; they'd think it was in your sleep.

Only take care you don't really fall asleep when they put out the lights.

Simon. No fear, I'll pinch my ears.

Tánya. Well, then, Sim, darling, only mind do as I tell you, and don't get frightened. He'll sign the paper, see if he don't! They're coming!

[*Gets under the sofa.*

[*Enter* GROSSMAN *and the* PROFESSOR, LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *and the* FAT LADY, *the* DOCTOR, SAHÁTOF *and* ANNA PÁVLOVNA. SIMON *stands near the door.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Please come in, all you doubters! Though we have a new and accidentally discovered medium, I expect very important phenomena to-night.

Sahátof. That's very, very interesting.

Fat Lady (*pointing to* SIMON). *Mais il est très bien!* [1]

Anna Pávlovna. Yes, as a butler's assistant, but hardly . . .

Sahátof. Wives never have any faith in their husbands' work. You don't believe in anything of this kind?

Anna Pávlovna. Of course not. Kaptchítch, it is true, has something exceptional about him, but Heaven knows what all this is about!

Fat Lady. No, Anna Pávlovna, permit me, you can't decide it in such a way. Before I was married, I once had a remarkable dream. Dreams, you know, are often such that you don't know where they begin and where they end; it was just such a dream that I . . .

[*Enter* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *and* PETRÍSTCHEF.

Fat Lady. And much was revealed to me by that dream. Nowadays the young people (*points to* PETRÍSTCHEF *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH) deny everything.

Vasíly Leoníditch. But look here, you know—now I, for instance, never deny anything! Eh, what?

[BETSY *and* MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA *enter, and begin talking to* PETRÍSTCHEF.

Fat Lady. And how can one deny the supernatural? They say it is unreasonable. But what if one's reason is stupid; what then? There now, on Garden Street, you

[1] *Fat Lady.* But he looks quite nice.

know . . . why, well, it appeared every evening! My husband's brother—what do you call him? Not *beau-frère*—what's the other name for it?—I never can remember the names of these different relationships—well, he went there three nights running, and still he saw nothing; so I said to him . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, who is going to stay here?

Fat Lady. I! I!

Sahátof. I.

Anna Pávlovna (*to* DOCTOR). Do you mean to say you are going to stay?

Doctor. Yes; I must see, if only once, what it is that Alexéy Vladímiritch has discovered in it. How can we deny anything without proof?

Anna Pávlovna. Then I am to take it to-night for certain?

Doctor. Take what? . . . Oh, the powder. Yes, it would perhaps be better. Yes, yes, take it. . . . However, I shall come upstairs again.

Anna Pávlovna. Yes, please do. (*Loud.*) When it is over, *mesdames et messieurs,* I shall expect you to come to me upstairs to rest from your emotions, and then we will finish our rubber.

Fat Lady. Oh, certainly.

Sahátof. Yes, thanks!

[*Exit* ANNA PÁVLOVNA.

Betsy (*to* PETRÍSTCHEF). You must stay, I tell you. I promise you something extraordinary. Will you bet?

Márya Konstantínovna. But you don't believe in it?

Betsy. To-day I do.

Márya Konstantínovna (*to* PETRÍSTCHEF). And do you believe?

Petrístchef. "I can't believe, I cannot trust a heart for falsehood framed." Still, if Elizabeth Leonídovna commands . . .

Vasíly Leoníditch. Let us stay, Márya Konstantínovna. Eh, what? I shall invent something *épâtant.*

Márya Konstantínovna. No, you mustn't make me laugh. You know I can't restrain myself.

Vasíly Leoníditch (*loud*). I remain!

Leonid Fyódoritch (*severely*). But I beg those who remain not to joke about it. It is a serious matter.

Petristchef. Do you hear? Well then, let's stay. Vovo, sit here, and don't be too shy.

Betsy. Yes, it's all very well for you to laugh; but just wait till you see what will happen.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Oh, but supposing it's true? Won't it be a go! Eh, what?

Petristchef (*trembles*). Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid! Márya Konstantínovna, I'm afraid! My tootsies tremble.

Betsy (*laughing*). Not so loud.

[*All sit down.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Take your seats, take your seats. Simon, sit down!

Simon. Yes, sir.

[*Sits down on the edge of the chair.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Sit properly.

Professor. Sit straight in the middle of the chair, and quite at your ease.

[*Arranges* SIMON *on his chair.*

[BETSY, MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA *and* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *laugh.*

Leonid Fyódoritch (*raising his voice*). I beg those who are going to remain here not to behave frivolously, but to regard this matter seriously, or bad results might follow. Do you hear, Vovo! If you can't be quiet, go away!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Quiet, quiet!

[*Hides behind* FAT LADY.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Alexéy Vladímiritch, will you mesmerise him?

Professor. No; why should I do it when Antón Borísitch is here? He has had far more practice and has more power in that department than I. . . . Antón Borísitch!

Grossman. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not, strictly speaking, a spiritualist. I have only studied hypnotism. It is true I have studied hypnotism in all its known manifestations; but what is called spiritualism, is entirely unknown to me. When a subject is thrown into a trance, I may expect the hypnotic phenomena known to me: lethargy, abulia, anæsthesia, analgesia, catalepsy, and every kind of

susceptibility to suggestion. Here it is not these but other phenomena we expect to observe. Therefore it would be well to know of what kind are the phenomena we expect to witness, and what is their scientific significance.

Sahátof. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Grossman. Such an explanation would be very interesting.

Leonid Fyódoritch. I think Alexéy Vladímiritch will not refuse to give us a short explanation.

Professor. Why not? I can give an explanation if it is desired. (*To the* DOCTOR.) Will you kindly note his temperature and pulse? My explanation must, of necessity, be cursory and brief.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, please; briefly, quite briefly.

Doctor. All right. (*Takes out thermometer.*) Now then, my lad . . .

[*Places the thermometer.*

Simon. Yes, sir!

Professor (*rising and addressing the* FAT LADY—*then reseating himself*). Ladies and gentlemen! The phenomenon we are investigating to-night is regarded, on the one hand, as something new; and, on the other, as something transcending the limits of natural conditions. Neither view is correct. This phenomenon is not new but is as old as the world; and it is not supernatural but is subject to the eternal laws that govern all that exists. This phenomenon has been usually defined as "intercourse with the spirit world." That definition is inexact. Under such a definition the spirit world is contrasted with the material world. But this is erroneous; there is no such contrast! Both worlds are so closely connected that it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation, separating the one from the other. We say matter is composed of molecules . . .

Petrístchef. Prosy matter!

[*Whispering and laughter.*

Professor (*pauses, then continues*). Molecules are composed of atoms, but the atoms, having no extension, are in reality nothing but the points of application of forces. Strictly speaking, not of forces but of energy, that same energy which is as much a unity and just as indestructible as matter. But matter, though one, has many different

aspects, and the same is true of energy. Till recently only four forms of energy, convertible into one another, have been known to us: energies known as the dynamic, the thermal, the electric, and the chemic. But these four aspects of energy are far from exhausting all the varieties of its manifestation. The forms in which energy may manifest itself are very diverse, and it is one of these new and as yet but little known phases of energy, that we are investigating to-night. I refer to mediumistic energy.

[*Renewed whispering and laughter among the young people.*

Professor (*stops and casts a severe look round*). Mediumistic energy has been known to mankind for ages: prophecy, presentiments, visions and so on, are nothing but manifestations of mediumistic energy. The manifestations produced by it have, I say, been known to mankind for ages. But the energy itself has not been recognised as such till quite recently—not till that medium, the vibrations of which cause the manifestations of mediumistic energy, was recognised. In the same way that the phenomena of light were inexplicable until the existence of an imponderable substance—an ether—was recognised, so mediumistic phenomena seemed mysterious until the now fully established fact was recognised, that between the particles of ether there exists another still more rarefied imponderable substance not subject to the law of the three dimensions . . .

[*Renewed laughter, whispers, and giggling.*

Professor (*again looks round severely*). And just as mathematical calculations have irrefutably proved the existence of imponderable ether which gives rise to the phenomena of light and electricity, so the successive investigations of the ingenious Hermann, of Schmidt, and of Joseph Schmatzhofen, have confirmed beyond a doubt the existence of a substance which fills the universe and may be called spiritual ether.

Fat Lady. Ah, now I understand. I am so grateful . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, but Alexéy Vladímiritch, could you not . . . condense it a little?

Professor (*not heeding the remark*). And so, as I have

just had the honor of mentioning to you, a succession of strictly scientific experiments have made plain to us the laws of mediumistic phenomena. These experiments have proved that, when certain individuals are plunged into a hypnotic state (a state differing from ordinary sleep only by the fact that man's physiological activity is not lowered by the hypnotic influence but, on the contrary, is always heightened—as we have recently witnessed), when, I say, any individual is plunged into such a state, this always produces certain perturbations in the spiritual ether—perturbations quite similar to those produced by plunging a solid body into liquid matter. These perturbations are what we call mediumistic phenomena . . .

[*Laughter and whispers.*

Sahátof. That is quite comprehensible and correct; but if, as you are kind enough to inform us, the plunging of the medium into a trance produces perturbations of the spiritual ether, allow me to ask why (as is usually supposed to be the case in spiritualistic séances) these perturbations result in an activity on the part of the souls of dead people?

Professor. It is because the molecules of this spiritual ether are nothing but the souls of the living, the dead, and the unborn, and any vibration of the spiritual ether must inevitably cause a certain vibration of its atoms. These atoms are nothing but human souls, which enter into communication with one another by means of these movements.

Fat Lady (*to* SAHÁTOF). What is it that puzzles you? It is so simple. . . . Thank you so, so much!

Leonid Fyódoritch. I think everything has now been explained, and that we may commence.

Doctor. The fellow is in a perfectly normal condition: temperature 37 decimal 2, pulse 74.

Professor (*takes out his pocket-book and notes this down*). What I have just had the honor of explaining will be confirmed by the fact, which we shall presently have an opportunity of observing, that after the medium has been thrown into a trance his temperature and pulse will inevitably rise, just as occurs in cases of hypnotism.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, yes. But excuse me a moment.

I should like to reply to Sergéy Iványitch's question: How do we know we are in communication with the souls of the dead? We know it because the spirit that appears, plainly tells us—as simply as I am speaking to you—who he is, and why he has come, and whether all is well with him! At our last séance a Spaniard, Don Castillos, came to us, and he told us everything. He told us who he was, and when he died, and that he was suffering for having taken part in the Inquisition. He even told us what was happening to him at the very time that he was speaking to us, namely, that at the very time he was talking to us he had to be born again on earth, and, therefore, could not continue his conversation with us. . . . But you'll see for yourselves . . .

Fat Lady (*interrupting*). Oh, how interesting! Perhaps the Spaniard was born in one of our houses and is a baby now!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Quite possibly.

Professor. I think it is time we began.

Leonid Fyódoritch. I was only going to say . . .

Professor. It is getting late.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Very well. Then we will commence. Antón Borísitch, be so good as to hypnotize the medium.

Grossman. What method would you like me to use? There are several methods. There is Braid's system, there is the Egyptian symbol, and there is Charcot's system.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*to the* PROFESSOR). I think it is quite immaterial.

Professor. Quite.

Grossman. Then I will make use of my own method, which I showed in Odessa.

Leonid Fyódoritch. If you please!

[GROSSMAN *waves his arms above* SIMON. SIMON *closes his eyes and stretches himself.*

Grossman (*looking closely at him*). He is falling asleep! He is asleep! A remarkably rapid occurrence of hypnosis. The subject has evidently already reached a state of anæsthesia. He is remarkable,—an unusually impressionable subject, and might be subjected to interesting experiments!

. . . (*Sits down, rises, sits down again.*) Now one might run a needle into his arm. If you like . . .

Professor (*to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH). Do you notice how the medium's trance acts on Grossman? He is beginning to vibrate.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, yes . . . can the lights be extinguished now?

Sahátof. But why is darkness necessary?

Professor. Darkness? Because it is a condition of the manifestation of mediumistic energy, just as a given temperature is a condition necessary for certain manifestations of chemical or dynamic energy.

Leonid Fyódoritch. But not always. Manifestations have been observed by me, and by many others, both by candlelight and daylight.

Professor (*interrupting*). May the lights be put out?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, certainly. (*Puts out candles.*) Ladies and gentlemen! attention, if you please.

[TÁNYA *gets from under the sofa and takes hold of a thread tied to a chandelier.*

Petrístchef. I like that Spaniard! Just in the midst of a conversation—off he goes head downwards . . . as the French say: *piquer une tête.*[1]

Betsy. You just wait a bit, and see what will happen!

Petrístchef. I have only one fear, and that is that Vovo may be moved by the spirit to grunt like a pig!

Vasíly Leoníditch. Would you like me to? I will . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Gentlemen! Silence, if you please!

[*Silence.* SIMON *licks the matches on his fingers and rubs his knuckles with them.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. A light! Do you see the light?

Sahátof. A light? Yes, yes, I see; but allow me . . .

Fat Lady. Where? Where? Oh, dear, I did not see it! Ah, there it is. Oh! . . .

Professor (*whispers to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH, *and points to* GROSSMAN, *who is moving*). Do you notice how he vibrates? It is the dual influence.

[*The light appears again.*

[1] To take a header.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*to the* PROFESSOR). It must be he —you know!

Sahátof. Who?

Leonid Fyódoritch. A Greek, Nicholas. It is his light. Don't you think so, Alexéy Vladímiritch?

Sahátof. Who is this Greek, Nicholas?

Professor. A certain Greek, who was a monk at Constantinople under Constantine and who has been visiting us lately.

Fat Lady. Where is he? Where is he? I don't see him.

Leonid Fyódoritch. He is not yet visible . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, he is particularly well disposed towards you. You question him.

Professor (*in a peculiar voice*). Nicholas! Is that you?

[TÁNYA *raps twice on the wall.*

Leonid Fyódoritch (*joyfully*). It is he! It is he!

Fat Lady. Oh, dear! Oh! I shall go away!

Sahátof. Why do you suppose it is he?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Why, the two knocks. It is an affirmative answer; else all would have been silence.

[*Silence. Suppressed giggling in the young people's corner.* TÁNYA *throws a lampshade, pencil and penwiper upon the table.*

Leonid Fyódoritch (*whispers*). Do you notice, gentlemen, here is a lamp-shade, and something else—a pencil! . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, it is a pencil!

Professor. All right, all right! I am watching both him and Grossman!

[GROSSMAN *rises and feels the things that have fallen on the table.*

Sahátof. Excuse me, excuse me! I should like to see whether it is not the medium who is doing it all himself?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Do you think so? Well, sit by him and hold his hands. But you may be sure he is asleep.

Sahátof (*approaches.* TÁNYA *lets a thread touch his head. He is frightened, and stoops*). Ye . . . ye . . . yes! Strange, very strange!

[*Takes hold of* SIMON'S *elbow.* SIMON *howls.*

Professor (*to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH). Do you notice the

effect of Grossman's presence? It is a new phenomenon—I must note it . . .

[*Runs out to note it down, and returns again.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes. . . . But we cannot leave Nicholas without an answer. We must begin . . .

Grossman (*rises, approaches* SIMON *and raises and lowers his arm*). It would be interesting to produce contraction! The subject is in profound hypnosis.

Professor (*to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH). Do you see? Do you see?

Grossman. If you like . . .

Doctor. Now then, my dear sir, leave the management to Alexéy Vladímiritch; the affair is turning out serious.

Professor. Leave him alone, he (*referring to* GROSSMAN) is talking in his sleep!

Fat Lady. How glad I now am that I resolved to be present! It is frightening, but all the same I am glad, for I always said to my husband . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. Silence, if you please.

[TÁNYA *draws a thread over the* FAT LADY'S *head.*

Fat Lady. Aie!

Leonid Fyódoritch. What? What is it?

Fat Lady. He took hold of my hair!

Leonid Fyódoritch (*whispers*). Never mind, don't be afraid, give him your hand. His hand will be cold, but I like it.

Fat Lady (*hides her hands*). Not for the world!

Sahátof. Yes, it is strange, very strange!

Leonid Fyódoritch. He is here and is seeking for intercourse. Who wishes to put a question to him?

Sahátof. I should like to put a question, if I may.

Professor. Please do.

Sahátof. Do I believe or not?

[TÁNYA *knocks twice.*

Professor. The answer is affirmative.

Sahátof. Allow me to ask again. Have I a ten rouble note in my pocket?

[TÁNYA *knocks several times and passes a thread over* SAHÁTOF'S *head.*

Sahátof. Ah! [*Seizes the thread and breaks it.*

Professor. I should ask those present not to ask indefinite or trivial questions. It is unpleasant to *him!*

Sahátof. No, but allow me! Here I have a thread in my hand!

Leonid Fyódoritch. A thread? Hold it fast; that happens often, and not only threads but sometimes even silk cords—very ancient ones!

Sahátof. No—but where did this thread come from?

[TÁNYA *throws a cushion at him.*

Sahátof. Wait a bit; wait! Something soft has hit me on the head. Light a candle—there is something . . .

Professor. We beg of you not to interrupt the manifestations.

Fat Lady. For goodness' sake, don't interrupt! I should also like to ask something. May I?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, if you like.

Fat Lady. I should like to ask about my digestion. May I? I want to know what to take: aconite or belladonna?

[*Silence, whispers among the young people; suddenly* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *begins to cry like a baby: "ou-a, ou-a!" (Laughter.) Holding their mouths and noses, the girls and* PETRÍSTCHEF *run away bursting with laughter.*

Fat Lady. Ah, that must be the monk who's been born again!

Leonid Fyódoritch (*beside himself with anger, whispers*). One gets nothing but tomfoolery from you! If you don't know how to behave decently, go away!

[*Exit* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. *Darkness and silence.*

Fat Lady. Oh, what a pity! Now one can't ask any more! He is born!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Not at all. It is only Vovo's nonsense. But *he* is here. Ask him.

Professor. That often happens. These jokes and ridicule are quite usual occurrences. I expect *he* is still here. But we may ask. Leonid Fyódoritch, will you?

Leonid Fyódoritch. No, you, if you please. This has upset me. So unpleasant! Such want of tact! . . .

Professor. Very well. . . . Nicholas, are you here?

[TÁNYA *raps twice and rings.* SIMON *roars, spreads his arms out, seizes* SAHÁTOF *and the* PROFESSOR *—squeezing them.*

Professor. What an unexpected phenomenon! The medium himself reacted upon! This never happened before! Leoníd Fyódoritch, will you watch? It is difficult for me to do so. He squeezes me so! Mind you observe Grossman! This needs the very greatest attention!

[TÁNYA *throws the* PEASANTS' *paper on the table.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Something has fallen upon the table.

Professor. See what it is!

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Paper! A folded paper!

[TÁNYA *throws a travelling inkstand on the table.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch. An inkstand!

[TÁNYA *throws a pen.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch. A pen!

[SIMON *roars and squeezes.*

Professor (*crushed*). Wait a bit, wait: a totally new manifestation! The action proceeding not from the mediumistic energy produced, but from the medium himself! However, open the inkstand, and put the pen on the table, and *he* will write!

[TÁNYA *goes behind* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *and strikes him on the head with the guitar.*

Leoníd Fyódoritch. He has struck me on the head! (*Examining table.*) The pen is not writing yet and the paper remains folded.

Professor. See what the paper is, and quickly; evidently the dual influence—his and Grossman's—has produced a perturbation!

Leoníd Fyódoritch (*goes out and returns at once*). Extraordinary! This paper is an agreement with some peasants that I refused to sign this morning and returned to the peasants. Probably *he* wants me to sign it?

Professor. Of course! Of course! But ask him.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Nicholas, do you wish . . .

[TÁNYA *knocks twice.*

Professor. Do you hear? It is quite evident!

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *takes the paper and pen and*

goes out. TÁNYA *knocks, plays on the guitar and the accordion, and then creeps under the sofa.* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *returns.* SIMÓN *stretches himself and coughs.*

Leonid Fyódoritch. He is waking up. We can light the candles.

Professor (*hurriedly*). Doctor, Doctor, please, his pulse and temperature! You will see that a rise of both will be apparent.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*lights the candles*). Well, what do you gentlemen who were sceptical think of it now?

Doctor (*goes up to* SIMON *and places thermometer*). Now then my lad. Well, have you had a nap? There, put that in there, and give me your hand.

[*Looks at his watch.*

Sahátof (*shrugging his shoulders*). I must admit that all that has occurred cannot have been done by the medium. But the thread? . . . I should like the thread explained.

Leonid Fyódoritch. A thread! A thread! We have been witnessing manifestations more important than a thread.

Sahátof. I don't know. At all events, *je réserve mon opinion.*

Fat Lady (*to* SAHÁTOF). Oh, no, how can you say: "*je réserve mon opinion*"? And the infant with the little wings? Didn't you see? At first I thought it was only an illusion, but afterwards it became clearer and clearer, like a live . . .

Sahátof. I can only speak of what I have seen. I did not see that—nothing of the kind.

Fat Lady. You don't mean to say so? Why, it was quite plainly visible! And to the left there was a monk clothed in black bending over it . . .

Sahátof (*moves away. Aside*). What exaggeration!

Fat Lady (*addressing the* DOCTOR). You must have seen it! It rose up from your side.

[DOCTOR *goes on counting the pulse without heeding her.*

Fat Lady (*to* GROSSMAN). And that light, the light around it, especially around its little face! And the ex-

pression so mild and tender, something so heavenly!

[*Smiles tenderly herself.*

Grossman. I saw phosphorescent light, and objects changed their places, but I saw nothing more than that.

Fat Lady. Don't tell me! You don't mean it! It is simply that you scientists of Charcot's school do not believe in a life beyond the grave! As for me, no one could now make me disbelieve in a future life—no one in the world!

[GROSSMAN *moves away from her.*

Fat Lady. No, no, whatever you may say, this is one of the happiest moments of my life! When I heard Sarasate play, and now. . . . Yes! (*No one listens to her. She goes up to* SIMON.) Now tell me, my friend, what did you feel? Was it very trying?

Simon (*laughs*). Yes, ma'm, just so.

Fat Lady. Still not unendurable?

Simon. Just so, ma'm. (*To* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH.) Am I to go?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, you may go.

Doctor (*to the* PROFESSOR). The pulse is the same, but the temperature is lower.

Professor. Lower! (*Considers awhile, then suddenly divines the conclusion.*) It had to be so—it had to descend! The dual influence crossing had to produce some kind of reflex action. Yes, that's it!

Exeunt, all talking at once.

Leonid Fyódoritch. I'm only sorry we had no complete materialisation. But still. . . . Come, gentlemen, let us go to the drawing-room?

Fat Lady. What specially struck me was when he flapped his wings, and one saw how he rose!

Grossman (*to* SAHÁTOF). If we had kept to hypnotism, we might have produced a thorough state of epilepsy. The success might have been complete!

Sahátof. It is very interesting, but not entirely convincing. That is all I can say.

[*Enter* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.

Leonid Fyódoritch (*with paper in his hand*). Ah,

Theodore, what a remarkable séance we have had! It turns out that the peasants must have the land on their own terms.

Theodore Iványitch. Dear me!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Yes, indeed. (*Showing paper.*) Fancy, this paper that I returned to them, suddenly appeared on the table! I have signed it.

Theodore Iványitch. How did it get there?

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, it did get there!

[*Exit.* THEODORE IVÁNITCH *follows him out.*

Tánya (*gets from under the sofa and laughs*). Oh, dear, oh dear! Well, I did get a fright when he got hold of the thread! (*Shrieks.*) Well, anyhow, it's all right—he has signed it!

[*Enter* GREGORY.

Gregory. So it was you that was fooling them?

Tánya. What business is it of yours?

Gregory. And do you think the missis will be pleased with you for it? No, you bet; you're caught now! I'll tell them what tricks you're up to, if you don't let me have my way!

Tánya. And you'll not get your way, and you'll not do me any harm!

CURTAIN

ACT IV

The same scene as in Act I. The next day. Two liveried footmen, THEODORE IVÁNITCH *and* GREGORY.

First Footman (*with grey whiskers*). Yours is the third house to-day. Thank goodness that all the at-homes are in this direction. Yours used to be on Thursdays.

Theodore Ivánitch. Yes, we changed to Saturday so as to be on the same day as the Golóvkins and Grade von Grabes . . .

Second Footman. The Stcherbákofs do the thing well. There's refreshments for the footmen every time they've a ball.

[*The two* PRINCESSES, *mother and daughter, come down the stairs accompanied by* BETSY. *The old* PRINCESS *looks in her note-book and at her watch, and sits down on the settle.* GREGORY *puts on her overshoes.*

Young Princess. Now, do come. Because, if you refuse, and Dodo refuses, the whole thing will be spoilt.

Betsy. I don't know. I must certainly go to the Shoúbins. And then there is the rehearsal.

Young Princess. You'll have plenty of time. Do, please. *Ne nous fais pas faux bond.*[1] Fédya and Koko will come.

Betsy. J'en ai par-dessus la tête de votre Koko.[2]

Young Princess. I thought I should see him here. *Ordinairement il est d'une exactitude . . .*[3]

Betsy. He is sure to come.

Young Princess. When I see you together, it always seems to me that he has either just proposed or is just going to propose.

[1] Do not disappoint us.

[2] *Betsy.* I have more than enough of your Koko.

[3] *Young Princess. . . .* He is usually so very punctual . . .

Betsy. Yes, I don't suppose it can be avoided. I shall have to go through with it. And it is so unpleasant!

Young Princess. Poor Koko! He is head over ears in love.

Betsy. *Cessez, les gens!* [1]

[YOUNG PRINCESS *sits down, talking in whispers.* GREGORY *puts on her overshoes.*

Young Princess. Well then, good-bye till this evening.

Betsy. I'll try to come.

Old Princess. Then tell your papa that I don't believe in anything of the kind, but will come to see his new medium. Only he must let me know when. Good afternoon, *ma toute belle.*

[*Kisses* BETSY, *and exit, followed by her daughter.* BETSY *goes upstairs.*

Gregory. I don't like putting on an old woman's overshoes for her; she can't stoop, can't see her shoe for her stomach, and keeps poking her foot in the wrong place. It's different with a young one; it's pleasant to take her foot in one's hand.

Second Footman. Hear him! Making distinctions!

First Footman. It's not for us footmen to make such distinctions.

Gregory. Why shouldn't one make distinctions; are we not men? It's they think we don't understand! Just now they were deep in their talk, then they look at me, and at once it's "lay zhon!"

Second Footman. And what's that?

Gregory. Oh, that means, "Don't talk, they understand!" It's the same at table. But I understand! You say, there's a difference? I say there is none.

First Footman. There is a great difference for those who understand.

Gregory. There is none at all. To-day I am a footman, and to-morrow I may be living no worse than they are. Has it never happened that they've married footmen? I'll go and have a smoke.

[*Exit.*

Second Footman. That's a bold young man you've got.

[1] *Betsy.* Cease; mind the servants!

Theodore Ivánitch. A worthless fellow, not fit for service. He used to be an office boy and has got spoilt. I advised them not to take him, but the mistress liked him. He looks well on the carriage when they drive out.

First Footman. I should like to send him to our Count; he'd put him in his place! Oh, he don't like those scatter-brains. "If you're a footman, be a footman and fulfil your calling." Such pride is not befitting.

[PETRÍSTCHEF *comes running downstairs, and takes out a cigarette.*

Petrístchef (*deep in thought*). Let's see, my second is the same as my first. Echo, a-co, co-coa. (*Enter* KOKO KLÍNGEN, *wearing his pince-nez.*) Ko-ko, co-coa. Cocoa tin, where do you spring from?

Koko Klíngen. From the Stcherbákofs. You are always playing the fool . . .

Petrístchef. No, listen to my charade. My first is the same as my second, my third may be cracked, my whole is like your pate.

Koko Klíngen. I give it up. I've no time.

Petrístchef. Where else are you going?

Koko Klíngen. Where? Of course to the Ívins, to practice for the concert. Then to the Shoúbins, and then to the rehearsal. You'll be there too, won't you?

Petrístchef. Most certainly. At the re-her-Sall and also at the re-her-Sarah. Why, at first I was a savage, and now I am both a savage and a general.

Koko Klíngen. How did yesterday's séance go off?

Petrístchef. Screamingly funny! There was a peasant, and above all, it was all in the dark. Vovo cried like an infant, the Professor defined, and Márya Vasílevna refined. Such a lark! You ought to have been there.

Koko Klíngen. I'm afraid, *mon cher.* You have a way of getting off with a jest, but I always feel that if I say a word they'll construe it into a proposal. *Et ça ne m'arrange pas du tout, du tout. Mais du tout, du tout!* [1]

Petrístchef. Instead of a proposal, make a proposition, and receive a sentence! Well, I shall go in to Vovo's. If you'll call for me, we can go to the re-her-Sarah together.

[1] And that won't suit me at all, at all! Not at all, at all!

Koko Klíngen. I can't think how you can be friends with such a fool. He is so stupid—a regular blockhead!

Petrístchef. And I am fond of him. I love Vovo, but . . . "with a love so strange, ne'er towards him the path untrod shall be" . . .

[*Exit into* Vovo's *room.*

[Betsy *comes down with a* Lady. Koko *bows significantly to* Betsy.

Betsy (*shaking* Koko's *hand without turning towards him. To* Lady). You are acquainted?

Lady. No.

Betsy. Baron Klíngen. . . . Why were you not here last night?

Koko Klíngen. I could not come, I was engaged.

Betsy. What a pity, it was so interesting! (*Laughs.*) You should have seen what manifestations we had! Well, how is our charade getting on?

Koko Klíngen. Oh, the verses for *mon second* are ready. Nick composed the verses, and I the music.

Betsy. What are they? What are they? Do tell me!

Koko Klíngen. Wait a minute; how does it go? . . . Oh, the knight sings:

"Oh, *naught* so beautiful as nature:
The *Nautilus* sails by.
Oh, *naughty* lass, oh, *naughty* lass!
Oh, *nought,* oh, *nought!* Oh, fie!"

Lady. I see, my second is "nought," and what is my first?

Koko Klíngen. My first is *Aero,* the name of a girl savage.

Betsy. Aero, you see, is a savage who wished to devour the object of her love. (*Laughs.*) She goes about lamenting, and sings—

"My appetite,"

Koko Klíngen (*interrupts*)—

"How can I fight," . . .

Betsy (*chimes in*)—

"Some one to chew I long.
I seeking go . . ."

Koko Klíngen—

"But even so . . ."

Betsy—

"No one to chew can find."

Koko Klíngen—

"A raft sails by,"

Betsy—

"It cometh nigh;
Two generals upon it . . ."

Koko Klíngen—

"Two generals are we:
By fate's hard decree,
To this island we flee."

And then, the refrain—

"By fate's hard decree,
To this island we flee."

Lady. *Charmant!*

Betsy. But just think how silly!

Koko Klíngen. Yes, that's the charm of it!

Lady. And who is to be Aero?

Betsy. I am. And I have had a costume made, but mamma says it's "not decent." And it is not a bit less decent than a ball dress. (*To* THEODORE IVÁNITCH.) Is Bourdier's man here?

Theodore Ivánitch. Yes, he is waiting in the kitchen.

Lady. Well, and how will you represent Aeronaut?

Betsy. Oh, you'll see. I don't want to spoil the pleasure for you. *Au revoir.*

Lady. Good-bye!

[*They bow.* *Exit* LADY.

Betsy (*to* KOKO KLÍNGEN). Come up to mamma.

[BETSY *and* KOKO *go upstairs.* JACOB *enters from servants' quarters, carrying a tray with teacups, cakes, etc., and goes panting across the stage.*

Jacob (*to the* FOOTMEN). How d'you do? How d'you do?

[FOOTMEN *bow.*

Jacob (*to* THEODORE IVÁNITCH). Couldn't you tell Gregory to help a bit! I'm ready to drop. . . .

[*Exit up the stairs.*

First Footman. That is a hard-working chap you've got there.

Theodore Iványitch. Yes, a good fellow. But there now—he doesn't satisfy the mistress, she says his appearance is ungainly. And now they've gone and told tales about him for letting some peasants into the kitchen yesterday. It is a bad look-out: they may dismiss him. And he is a good fellow.

Second Footman. What peasants were they?

Theodore Iványitch. Peasants that had come from our Koursk village to buy some land. It was night, and they were our fellow-countrymen, one of them the father of the butler's assistant. Well, so they were asked into the kitchen. It so happened that there was thought-reading going on. Something was hidden in the kitchen, and all the gentlefolk came down, and the mistress saw the peasants. There was such a row! "How is this," she says; "these people may be infected, and they are let into the kitchen!" . . . She is terribly afraid of this infection.

[*Enter* GREGORY.

Theodore Iványitch. Gregory, you go and help Jacob, I'll stay here. He can't manage alone.

Gregory. He's awkward, that's why he can't manage.

[*Exit.*

First Footman. And what is this new mania they have got? This infection! . . . So yours also is afraid of it?

Theodore Iványitch. She fears it worse than fire! Our chief business, nowadays, is fumigating, washing, and sprinkling.

First Footman. I see. That's why there is such a stuffy smell here. (*With animation.*) I don't know what we're coming to with these infection notions. It's just detestable! They seem to have forgotten the Lord. There's our master's sister, Princess Mosolóva, her daughter was dying, and, will you believe it, neither father nor mother would come near her! So she died without their having taken leave of her. And the daughter cried, and called them to say good-bye—but they didn't go! The doctor had discovered some infection or other! And yet their own maid and a trained nurse were with her, and nothing happened to them; they're still alive!

[*Enter* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH *and* PETRÍSTCHEF *from* VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH'S *room, smoking cigarettes.*

Petrístchef. Come along then, only I must take Koko —Cocoanut, with me.

Vasíly Leoníditch. Your Koko is a regular dolt; I can't bear him. A hare-brained fellow, a regular gad-about! Without any kind of occupation, eternally loafing around! Eh, what?

Petrístchef. Well, anyhow, wait a bit, I must say good-bye.

Vasíly Leoníditch. All right. And I will go and look at my dogs in the coachman's room. I've got a dog there that's so savage, the coachman said, he nearly ate him.

Petrístchef. Who ate whom? Did the coachman really eat the dog?

Vasíly Leoníditch. You are always at it!

[*Puts on outdoor things and goes out.*

Petrístchef (*thoughtfully*). Ma - kin - tosh, Co - co - tin. . . . Let's see. [*Goes upstairs.*

[JACOB *runs across the stage.*

Theodore Ivánitch. What's the matter?

Jacob. There is no more thin bread and butter. I said . . . [*Exit.*]

Second Footman. And then our master's little son fell ill, and they sent him at once to an hotel with his nurse, and there he died without his mother.

First Footman. They don't seem to fear sin! *I* think you cannot escape from God anywhere.

Theodore Ivánitch. That's what I think.

[JACOB *runs upstairs with bread and butter.*

First Footman. One should consider too, that if we are to be afraid of everybody like that, we'd better shut ourselves up within four walls, as in a prison, and stick there!

[*Enter* TÁNYA; *she bows to the* FOOTMEN.

Tánya. Good afternoon.

[FOOTMEN *bow.*

Tánya. Theodore Ivánitch, I have a word to say to you.

Theodore Ivánitch. Well, what?

Tánya. The peasants have come again, Theodore Ivánitch . . .

Theodore Iványitch. Well? I gave the paper to Simon.

Tánya. I have given them the paper. They were that grateful! I can't say how! Now they only ask you to take the money.

Theodore Iványitch. But where are they?

Tánya. Here, by the porch.

Theodore Iványitch. All right, I'll tell the master.

Tánya. I have another request to you, dear Theodore Iványitch.

Theodore Iványitch. What now?

Tánya. Why, don't you see, Theodore Iványitch, I can't remain here any longer. Ask them to let me go.

[*Enter* JACOB, *running.*

Theodore Iványitch (*to* JACOB). What d'you want?

Jacob. Another samovár, and oranges.

Theodore Iványitch. Ask the housekeeper.

[*Exit* JACOB.

Theodore Iványitch (*to* TÁNYA). How is that?

Tánya. Why, don't you see, my position is such . . .

Jacob (*runs in*). There are not enough oranges.

Theodore Iványitch. Serve up as many as you've got. (*Exit* JACOB.) Now's not the time! Just see what a bustle we are in.

Tánya. But you know yourself, Theodore Iványitch, there is no end to this bustle; one might wait for ever—you know yourself—and my affair is for life. . . . Dear Theodore Iványitch, you have done me a good turn, be a father to me now, choose the right moment and tell her, or else she'll get angry and won't let me have my passport.[1]

Theodore Iványitch. Where's the hurry?

Tánya. Why, Theodore Iványitch, it's all settled now. . . . And I could go to my godmother's and get ready, and then after Easter we'd get married.[2] Do tell her, dear Theodore Iványitch!

Theodore Iványitch. Go away—this is not the place.

[1] Employers have charge of the servants' passports, and in this way have a hold on them in case of misconduct.

[2] See footnote, p. 79. It is customary for peasants to marry just after Easter, but when spring has come and the field work begun, no marriages take place among them till autumn.

[*An elderly* GENTLEMAN *comes downstairs, puts on overcoat, and goes out, followed by the* SECOND FOOTMAN.

[*Exit* TÁNYA. *Enter* JACOB.

Jacob. Just fancy, Theodore Iványitch, it's too bad! She wants to discharge me now! She says, "You break everything, and forget Frisk, and you let the peasants into the kitchen against my orders!" And you know very well that I knew nothing about it. Tatyána told me, "Take them into the kitchen"; how could I tell whose order it was?

Theodore Iványitch. Did the mistress speak to you?

Jacob. She's just spoken. Do speak up for me, Theodore Iványitch! You see, my people in the country are only just getting on their feet, and suppose I lose my place, when shall I get another? Theodore Iványitch, do, please!

[ANNA PÁVLOVNA *comes down with the old* COUNTESS, *whom she is seeing off. The* COUNTESS *has false teeth and hair. The* FIRST FOOTMAN *helps the* COUNTESS *into her outdoor things.*

Anna Pávlovna. Oh, most certainly, of course! I am so deeply touched.

Countess. If it were not for my illness, I should come oftener to see you.

Anna Pávlovna. You should really consult Peter Petróvitch. He is rough, but nobody can soothe one as he does. He is so clear, so simple.

Countess. Oh no, I shall keep to the one I am used to.

Anna Pávlovna. Pray, take care of yourself.

Countess. Merci, mille fois merci.[1]

[GREGORY, *dishevelled and excited, jumps out from the servants' quarters.* SIMON *appears behind him in the doorway.*

Simon. You'd better leave her alone!

Gregory. You rascal! I'll teach you how to fight, you scamp, you!

Anna Pávlovna. What do you mean? Do you think you are in a public-house?

[1] *Countess.* Thank you (for your hospitality), a thousand thanks.

Gregory. This coarse peasant makes life impossible for me.

Anna Pávlovna (*provoked*). You've lost your senses. Don't you see? (*To* COUNTESS.) *Merci, mille fois merci. A mardi!* [1]

[*Exeunt* COUNTESS *and* FIRST FOOTMAN.

Anna Pávlovna (*to* GREGORY). What is the meaning of this?

Gregory. Though I do occupy the position of a footman, still I won't allow every peasant to hit me; I have my pride too.

Anna Pávlovna. Why, what has happened?

Gregory. Why, this Simon of yours has got so brave, sitting with the gentlemen, that he wants to fight!

Anna Pávlovna. Why? What for?

Gregory. Heaven only knows!

Anna Pávlovna (*to* SIMON). What is the meaning of it?

Simon. Why does he bother her?

Anna Pávlovna. What has happened?

Simon (*smiles*). Well, you see, he is always catching hold of Tánya, the lady's-maid, and she won't have it. Well, so I just moved him aside a bit, just so, with my hand.

Gregory. A nice little bit! He's almost caved my ribs in, and has torn my dress-coat, and he says, "The same power as came over me yesterday comes on me again," and he begins to squeeze me.

Anna Pávlovna (*to* SIMON). How dare you fight in my house?

Theodore Iványitch. May I explain it to you, ma'am? I must tell you Simon is not indifferent to Tánya, and is engaged to her. And Gregory—one must admit the truth—does not behave properly, nor honestly, to her. Well, so I suppose Simon got angry with him.

Gregory. Not at all! It is all his spite, because I have discovered their trickery.

Anna Pávlovna. What trickery?

[1] *Anna Pávlovna.* Thank you (for coming to see us), a thousand thanks. Till next Tuesday!

Gregory. Why, at the séance. All those things, last night,—it was not Simon but Tánya who did them! I saw her getting out from under the sofa with my own eyes.

Anna Pávlovna. What is that? From under the sofa?

Gregory. I give you my word of honor. And it was she who threw the paper on the table. If it had not been for her the paper would not have been signed, nor the land sold to the peasants.

Anna Pávlovna. And you saw it yourself?

Gregory. With my own eyes. Shall I call her? She'll not deny it.

Anna Pávlovna. Yes, call her.

[*Exit* GREGORY.

[*Noise behind the scenes. The voice of the* DOORKEEPER, *"No, no, you cannot."* DOORKEEPER *is seen at the front door, the three* PEASANTS *rush in past him, the* SECOND PEASANT *first; the* THIRD *one stumbles, falls on his nose, and catches hold of it.*

Doorkeeper. You must not go in!

Second Peasant. Where's the harm? We are not doing anything wrong. We only wish to pay the money!

First Peasant. That's just it; as by laying on the signature the affair is come to a conclusion, we only wish to make payment with thanks.

Anna Pávlovna. Wait a bit with your thanks. It was all done by fraud! It is not settled yet. Not sold yet. . . . Leoníd. . . . Call Leoníd Fyódoritch.

[*Exit* DOORKEEPER.

[LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *enters, but, seeing his wife and the* PEASANTS, *wishes to retreat.*

Anna Pávlovna. No, no, come here, please! I told you the land must not be sold on credit, and everybody told you so, but you let yourself be deceived like the veriest blockhead.

Leoníd Fyódoritch. How? I don't understand who is deceiving?

Anna Pávlovna. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You have grey hair, and you let yourself be deceived and

laughed at like a silly boy. You grudge your son some three hundred roubles which his social position demands, and let yourself be tricked of thousands—like a fool!

Leonid Fyódoritch. Now come, Annette, try to be calm.

First Peasant. We are only come about the acceptation of the sum, for example . . .

Third Peasant (*taking out the money*). Let us finish the matter, for Christ's sake!

Anna Pávlovna. Wait, wait!

[*Enter* TÁNYA *and* GREGORY.

Anna Pávlovna (*angrily*). You were in the small drawing-room during the séance last night?

[TÁNYA *looks around at* THEODORE IVÁNITCH, LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH, *and* SIMON, *and sighs.*

Gregory. It's no use beating about the bush; I saw you myself . . .

Anna Pávlovna. Tell me, were you there? I know all about it, so you'd better confess! I'll not do anything to you. I only want to expose him (*pointing to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH) your master. . . . Did you throw the paper on the table?

Tánya. I don't know how to answer. Only one thing,—let me go home.

[*Enter* BETSY *unobserved.*

Anna Pávlovna (*to* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH). There, you see! You are being made a fool of.

Tánya. Let me go home, Anna Pávlovna!

Anna Pávlovna. No, my dear! You may have caused us a loss of thousands of roubles. Land has been sold that ought not to be sold!

Tánya. Let me go, Anna Pávlovna!

Anna Pávlovna. No; you'll have to answer for it! Such tricks won't do. We'll have you up before the Justice of the Peace!

Betsy (*comes forward*). Let her go, mamma. Or, if you wish to have her tried, you must have me tried too! She and I did it together.

Anna Pávlovna. Well, of course, if *you* have a hand in anything, what can one expect but the very worst results!

[*Enter the* PROFESSOR.

Professor. How do you do, Anna Pávlovna? How do you do, Miss Betsy? Leoníd Fyódoritch, I have brought you a report of the Thirteenth Congress of Spiritualists at Chicago. An amazing speech by Schmidt!

Leoníd Fyódoritch. Oh, that is interesting!

Anna Pávlovna. I will tell you something much more interesting! It turns out that both you and my husband were fooled by this girl! Betsy takes it on herself, but that is only to annoy me. It was an illiterate peasant girl who fooled you, and you believed it all. There were no mediumistic phenomena last night; it was she (*pointing to* TÁNYA) who did it!

Professor (*taking off his overcoat*). What do you mean?

Anna Pávlovna. I mean that it was she who, in the dark, played on the guitar and beat my husband on the head and performed all your idiotic tricks—and she has just confessed!

Professor (*smiling*). What does that prove?

Anna Pávlovna. It proves that your mediumism is—tomfoolery; that's what it proves!

Professor. Because this young girl wished to deceive, we are to conclude that mediumism is "tomfoolery," as you are pleased to express it? (*Smiles.*) A curious conclusion! Very possibly this young girl may have wished to deceive: that often occurs. She may even have done something; but then, what she did—*she* did. But the manifestations of mediumistic energy still remain manifestations of *mediumistic* energy! It is even very probable that what this young girl did evoked (and so to say solicited) the manifestation of mediumistic energy,—giving it a definite form.

Anna Pávlovna. Another lecture!

Professor (*sternly*). You say, Anna Pávlovna, that this girl, and perhaps this dear young lady also, did something; but the light we all saw, and, in the first case the fall, and in the second the rise of temperature, and Grossman's excitement and vibration—were those things also done by this girl? And these are facts, Anna Pávlovna,

facts! No! Anna Pávlovna, there are things which must be investigated and fully understood before they can be talked about, things too serious, too serious . . .

Leonid Fyódoritch. And the child that Márya Vasílevna distinctly saw? Why, I saw it too. . . . That could not have been done by this girl.

Anna Pávlovna. You think yourself wise, but you are—a fool.

Leonid Fyódoritch. Well, I'm going. . . . Alexéy Vladímiritch, will you come?

[*Exit into his study.*

Professor (*shrugging his shoulders, follows*). Oh, how far, how far, we still lag behind Western Europe!

[*Enter* JACOB.

Anna Pávlovna (*following* LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH *with her eyes*). He has been tricked like a fool, and he sees nothing! (*To* JACOB.) What do you want?

Jacob. How many persons am I to lay the table for?

Anna Pávlovna. For how many? . . . Theodore Ivánitch! Let him give up the silver plate to you. Be off, at once! It is all his fault! This man will bring me to my grave. Last night he nearly starved the dog that had done him no harm! And, as if that were not enough, he lets the infected peasants into the kitchen, and now they are here again! It is all his fault! Be off at once! Discharge him, discharge him! (*To* SIMON.) And you, horrid peasant, if you dare to have rows in my house again, I'll teach you!

Second Peasant. All right, if he is a horrid peasant there's no good keeping him; you'd better discharge him too, and there's an end of it.

Anna Pávlovna (*while listening to him looks at* THIRD PEASANT). Only look! Why, he has a rash on his nose—a rash! He is ill; he is a hotbed of infection!! Did I not give orders, yesterday, that they were not to be allowed into the house, and here they are again? Drive them out!

Theodore Ivánitch. Then are we not to accept their money?

Anna Pávlovna. Their money? Oh yes, take their money; but they must be turned out at once, especially this one! He is quite rotten!

Third Peasant. That's not just, lady. God's my witness, it's not just! You'd better ask my old woman, let's say, whether I am rotten! I'm clear as crystal, let's say.

Anna Pávlovna. He talks! . . . Off, off with him! It's all to spite me! . . . Oh, I can't bear it, I can't! . . . Send for the doctor!

[*Runs away, sobbing. Exit also* JACOB *and* GREGORY.

Tánya (*to* BETSY). Miss Elizabeth, darling, what am I to do now?

Betsy. Never mind, you go with them and I'll arrange it all.

[*Exit.*

First Peasant. Well, your reverence, how about the reception of the sum now?

Second Peasant. Let us settle up, and go.

Third Peasant (*fumbling with the packet of banknotes*). Had I known, I'd not have come for the world. It's worse than a fever!

Theodore Iványitch (*to* DOORKEEPER). Show them into my room. There's a counting-board there. I'll receive their money. Now go.

Doorkeeper. Come along.

Theodore Iványitch. And it's Tánya you have to thank for it. But for her you'd not have had the land.

First Peasant. That's just it. As she made the proposal, so she put it into effect.

Third Peasant. She's made men of us. Else what were we? We had so little land, no room to let a hen out, let's say, not to mention the cattle. Good-bye, dear! When you get to the village, come to us and eat honey.

Second Peasant. Let me get home and I'll start brewing the beer for the wedding! You will come?

Tánya. Yes, I'll come, I'll come! (*Shrieks.*) Simon, this is fine, isn't it?

[*Exeunt* PEASANTS.

Theodore Iványitch. Well, Tánya, when you have your house I'll come to visit you. Will you welcome me?

Tánya. Dear Theodore Iványitch, just the same as we would our own father!

[*Embraces and kisses him.*]

CURTAIN


M
HORACE BRODZKY-10